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लोकाभिरामं श्रीरामं भूयो भूयो नमाम्यहम्।

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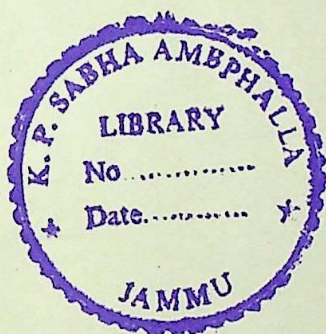
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Śrī Sītā-Rama

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते। पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते॥



The KALYANA-KALPATARU

OR
THE BLISS

A MONTHLY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF SPIRITUAL IDEAS AND LOVE FOR GOD

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विद्ययेव त्रयीदृष्ट्या दर्भपत्राग्रधीस्सुधीः।
राजपुत्र्या तया रामः प्रपेदे प्रीतिमुत्तमाम्॥

"Rāma experienced beatific joy in the company of princess Sītā, His divine consort just as a scholar gifted with sharp intellect enjoys the Supreme Knowledge after thoroughly studying *Trayī* (*Ṛk*, *Yajus* and *Sāma*)."

—*Campū Rāmāyaṇa* (I. 195)



Śrī Rāma: The Embodiment of Dharma

—Srimajjagadguru Shankaracharya of the Sharadapitha, Shringeri, Anantasrivibhushita Swami Sri Abhinavavidyatirthaji Maharaja

It is a glorious ideal that takes human life to the sublimity. Without any ideal before, only rare people can morally uplift their life. Firm determination, ever activeness and ideal—the three combined together provide godhood to a man. There too, in the absence of an ideal the other two simply misguide a man.

Do we have any such ideal before us based on which we can upgrade our life and what is that? On the sacred soil of India the great and exalted souls have taken birth in thousands. They lived a glorious life and guided the others. But 'embodiment of *Dharma*' (विग्रहवान् धर्म) is Rāma alone.

Mārīca, the demon was in himself a bundle of demoniacal tendencies. He was totally bereft of kindness, mercy or *Dharma* full of hard-heartedness and snobbery. Even he tells Rāvaṇa, the King of the *Rākṣasas,* regarding Rāma—'रामोविग्रहवान् धर्मः' (Śrī Rāma is *Dharma* embodied).

It is an indisputable principle that *Dharma* is the only refuge for those who try to achieve the ultimate good. If perchance 'embodied *Dharma*' is available what is else there to be sought for ?All bliss and good one will get under the very feet of such person. If there is any embodied *Dharma,* it is Rāma and Rāma alone. He assured 'लोकस्याराधनार्थाय त्यजेयं जानकीमपि' (In order to propitiate the subjects I am prepared to desert even My beloved Jānakī). Look, for the betterment of the world the God is prepared even to desert Jānakī the embodiment of auspiciousness.

The sage Vālmīki tells a very interesting tale about Śrī Rāma. It relates to the coronation of Rāma as crown prince.

King Daśaratha got old. A dilapidated body he had. He felt that he was incapable to cope with the administrative work. So he decided to consecrate Rāma on the throne. He called for the council of ministers and representatives of the subjects and presented his plan before them. The house unanimously approved of what he proposed (*V.R.* 2/2/21). The King Daśaratha was not sure about how a gentry of Ayodhya loved Rāma so much. He was a bit inquisitive. He enquired of them—"Well, I am ruling over the earth so religiously even then how is it so that you want Rāma on the throne?"

In reply to the question what the house-members said and how marvellously they paid encomiums to the unearthly qualities of Rāma makes the readers spellbound. In the beginning of *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa* Vālmīki himself gives a long list of qualities contained by Rāma with which all his life is full up to the brim. It is for this reason that he became so popular and what he did became an ideal for humanity at large for the ages to come. No doubt; Śrī Rāma was the incarnation of Mahāviṣṇu.

It is in the beginning of the creation when the lord taught the eternal religion *(Sanātana Dharma)* to the seers like Marīci etc. During His *Rāmāvatāra* period He practically taught the world how to live an ideal and the religious life to its extreme sublimity. Everybody either a child or an old man; an illiterate or the wisest, can take lesson from every character of *Rāmāyaṇa* and can improve his life in the best possible way. By reading the deeds of Rāma in *Rāmāyaṇa* all sins get destroyed and blissfulness enhances.



Various Means for the Direct Vision of Lord Rāma

—*Late Sri Jayadayal Goyandka*

There are many who with their doubting nature ask questions such as—"Is it possible in this iron age of *Kali* to have a direct vision of Lord Rāma in the same manner as two friends meet each other? If it is possible what are the means through which enchanting figure of the beloved can be visualized?"

As reply to these questions many means and methods can be given as enjoined by the *Śāstras*. Some of the important ones are described as under—

कृते यद् ध्यायतो विष्णुं त्रेतायां यजतो मखैः।
द्वापरे परिचर्यायां कलौ तद्धरिकीर्तनात्॥

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavata* XII. 3. 52)

In the *Satyayuga* meditation upon Lord Viṣṇu, in *Tretā* sacrificial rites, in *Dwāpara* adoration or worship were the means to achieve the ultimate object. But in the age of *Kali* only chanting of the divine name is enough for the purpose.

Just as when two pieces of *Araṇis* are intensely rubbed against each other, the fire bursts forth, similarly due to the sincere and truthful call of an intensively loving heart, the god appears. In other words due to the sounds of divine name lovingly pronounced, the Lord appears like fire from wood. Patañjali also corroborates in his *Yogasūtra*.

स्वाध्यायादिष्टदेवतासम्प्रयोगः।

(II. 44)

"By muttering name the vision of god—a chosen deity—becomes possible."

As a matter of fact the real importance of name, only

he can know whose mind is constantly engrossed in the divine name itself. Only that exalted soul is competent to say something on this subject who is frequently thrilled and horripilated due to the sweet memory of divine name; who is anguished in the separation of the beloved like a fish out of water; who is unable to dispense with the divine name even for a moment and quite desirelessly absorbed in making the *Japa*. And it is such person whose writings can be of some benefit for the devotees in this world.

My Personal Experience—

Even though I have not performed *Japa* in considerably sufficient number yet it will not be incorrect to say that right from my childhood I had a habit to make *Nāma-Japa* which gradually started eradicating worldly attachment from my mind and heart. It proved to be a great help in avoiding sins. Lust, anger and the like went on lessening and a strange peace flooded my heart. Sometimes when I closed my eyes and tried to practise meditation I could visualise Śrī Rāma in the mind. The worldly attractions were minimised and some sort of dispassionate detachment towards the worldly objects developed. During that period I relished solitude.

The Practice went on intensifying and one night in a dream I saw my beloved Lord Rāma alongwith Bhagavatī Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa and I had a conversation with Him face to face. Lord Rāma insisted that I should ask some boon but I had no such desire. Eventually I asked for a boon when too much pressurised, that I should have no separation from you at any time. It was all but the result of the *Nāma-Japa*.

Afterwards I was more and more benefitted which I am unable to describe. Of course I can say this much that apart from *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā* no other device appeared to me as beneficial as this *Nāma-Japa* was.

Whenever in my life I faced obstacles and problems of considerable magnitude which could distract me from the path

of discipline, I engaged myself in *Nāma-Japa* with all the love and faith and I invariably got rid of the crisis. Therefore it is my conviction that in order to remove the obstructions from the path of discipline and attraction to the worldly objects there is no other means except *Nāma-Japa* and meditation on the lovely figure of the Lord with love and faith. When I experienced so much peace, such an illimitable joy and peerless benefit with only scanty number of *Nāma-Japa*, well who can say about the beatific joy experienced by those who are always engrossed in the *Nāma-Japa* accompanied with the meditation. Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa says in *Mānasa* (VII. 103 (A)—"No other age can compare with the *Kali* age provided a man has faith (in its virtue), for in this age one can easily cross the ocean of transmigration simply by singing Śrī Rāma's holy praises." There itself in (I.21) he says: "Install the luminous gem in the shape of the divine name Rāma on the threshhold of the tongue at the doorway of your mouth, if you will to have light both inside and outside, O Tulasīdāsa."

The Means of Direct Divine Vision—

The best way to have a direct vision of the Lord, the bliss incarnate, is the sincere love. What should be the nature of this sincere love, will be discussed ahead.

Renouncing the lustful desires and greed for money like Lakṣmaṇa who followed the Lord even in jungles in most trying conditions.

By moving around Love intoxicated, quite oblivious of one's ownself like Sutīkṣṇa is another way to get the Lord. Tulasīdāsa ascribed his mental and bodily conditions when he got the happy news of the auspicious arrival of the Lord Rāma in a most impressive manner. Śiva tells Umā (*Mānasa* III.9. 5—8) "My eyes will be rewarded today by the sight of the Lord's lotus face, that delivers one from the bondage of worldly existence. The wise sage was drowned in a flood of love; his condition O Pārvatī, cannot be described in words. He had

no idea of the four quarters, much less of the intermediate points of the compass; nor could he make out the track. He did not know who he was or whither bound. He would now turn back and then resume his journey in the same direction and now he would dance and sing songs of praise. The sage had been gifted with devotion of the nature of intense love and the Lord watched him hiding Himself behind a tree. When the Hero of Raghu's line who dispels the fear of transmigration saw the sage's exuberant love, He revealed Himself in his heart. The sage sat motionless in the middle of the road, his body bristling like a jack-fruit with its hair standing on end. The Lord of Raghus thereupon drew near and was delighted at heart to see the state of his devotee."

Taking the refuge in the lotus feet of the Lord with ecstatic love like Hanumānjī is another way to visualise the Lord directly.

One can have the vision of the Lord if he feels anguished due to the separation as Bharata did. This is another way. On the verge of completing fourteen years what was the mental condition of Bharata, is marvellously described by Tulasī in his *Mānasa* (VII. O. 1. 4; VII. 1 A, B).

"I have a firm conviction in my heart that Śrī Rāma will surely meet me; for the omens are so propitious. But, if I outlive the expiry of the time-limit, no one would be so despicable in this world as I."

"While Bharata's mind was thus sinking in the ocean of separation from Śrī Rāma, the son of the windgod, disguised as a *Brāhmaṇa*, came like a bark to his rescue. He found Bharata seated on a mat of Kuśa grass, emaciated in body, with a coil of matted hair for a crown and the words "Rāma, Rāma Raghupati" on his lips, his lotus eyes streaming with tears."

After a conversation with Hanumān, how Bharata greets the Lord and how the Lord embraces Bharata, is beautifully described by Tulasī as—*Mānasa* (VII. 4. 1-2).

Meditation of Lord Rāma—

The Lord Kṛṣṇa paid too much encomium to the meditation. Meditation can be practised in a number of ways. It is up to a striver to select anyone of them according to his liking, sentiment and competency and finally the easiness in discipline. Sitting on a comfortable seat in a solitary place the striver should try to meditate as under—

The Lord Rāma accompanied with Lakṣmaṇa walks into the court of Janaka, the king of Mithila. The hue of Lord Rāma is somewhat greenish dark like the tip of 'दूर्वा' grass and that of Lakṣmaṇa is fair like gold. Both are so handsomely beautiful that the aggregate cosmic beauty is less than even a droplet before an ocean. Adolescent age. Holding bow, arrow and quiver. Divinely yellow shawl in the waist region. Hanging from the neck unearthly necklace of rubies and pearls and garland of fragrant flowers intermingled with *Tulasī* leaves. The beautiful large arms—repository of strength and might which are bedecked by appropriate ornaments studded with gems. High robust shoulders; the extremely beautiful chin and the nose pointed. Golden ear-rings crocodile shaped hanging beautifully. Beautiful reddish cheek with the reddest possible lips. Their lovely faces could make even the full moon of the autumn feel shy. The big eyes beautiful like lotus. The style of their looking was an allurement even to cupid—the god of love. The sweet smile surpassed in its beauty and soothing effect, even the beams of the moon. The curved eyebrows; spacious and dominating forehead with mark of *Tripuṇda* looks beauteous. The lovely black and curly locks of hairs put to shame the rows of black bees. Beautiful golden crowns adorning their heads. The sacred thread on the shoulders. They are walking like a young elephant. So much beauty they possess that crores of cupid cannot match them.



Rāma—Saguṇa and Nirguṇa

—Swami Ramsukhdas

According to *Śrīmadbhāgawata* (11.14.27) the person who always broods over the worldly objects, gets his mind deeply involved in those objects and he who always remembers Me, gets his mind absorbed in Me.

A real *Rāma-Bhakta* is he who has only one aim of his life—The Lord Rāma. Apart from Śrī Rāma he has nothing else to be aimed at, to be meditated upon, to be revered, acceptable, necessary, attracting, worth attaining and dearly such a person is *Rāma-Bhakta,* furnished with the divine tendencies.

Kāma-Bhakta—

One who aims at the money, the sense objects, praise and other worldly objects like these; and who in the otherworld desires to attain heavenly pleasures is a person having demoniacal tendencies fully developed in him.

Commoner—

Commoner is he in whom the divine and demoniacal both tendencies are equally prevalent. He should not consider himself to be a devotee of Rāma. Because there is nobody on earth who possesses only demoniacal or only divine tendencies. Therefore such a person belongs to the common stock of the people.

Striver—

A person deserving to be known as *Rāma-Bhakta* is he who does have demoniacal traits in him but those traits always pinch him; who is always worried on that point, who is unable to tolerate any deficiency in his devotion to Rāma. In other words such a person always tries to make *Bhajana* and *Dhyāna* of

the Lord. Eagerness for meditation upon God is always on the increase and who always prays to him such as—"O Lord! I must every moment remember you and you should never be away from the focus of my attention.

Transcendental Move—

As far as the striver goes on increasing the intensity of adoration and contemplation, in the same proportion the mind will go on being attracted towards Him and the more his mind is steeped in divine thinking the more his worldly attachment will go on diminishing. The more he will be detached from the world, in the same proportion his miseries will be removed and his mind will get more and more absorbed in god and the divine love will go on increasing. Ultimately he will attain the stage of god-realization. He will have done all things worth doing; will have attained ultimate attainable; will have known everything knowable. There will nothing remain worth doing, worth obtaining or worth knowing.

The Process of Fall—

Those whose mind is entrapped by the worldly desires will go on practising injustice and all other sins and eventually will fall into the most dreaded hell and reappear in demoniacal species, beasts and birds and immovable species like trees and plants. Therefore a man must determine his aim of life to be the devotion of Rāma avoiding the worldly attachment.

Nature and Form of Rāma—

Rāma is both attributeless and with attributes; formless and with form. He is qualified and unqualified; personal and impersonal and beyond both. *Paramātmā* is altogether different. The mental faculties and the mental power are limited and *Paramātmā* is limitless. Through limited powers it is not possible to comprehend the Reality beyond all limitations. That divine Reality can only be somehow hinted or pointed at.

Really speaking all qualities can find their abode in what is virtually beyond the ken of qualities; what is absolutely

unqualified. An entity possessing a few qualities can never have all qualities and the Ultimate Reality which is the eternal abode of all qualities is ever untainted by the qualities. The terms like *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa* or *Sākāra* and *Nirākāra,* are only adjectives which indicate something about that Ultimate Reality. They are not competent to give a complete description. It appears before its devotees emotionally charged, as qualified and personal whereas to those who are dominated by intellect, It appears to be unqualified and impersonal. Likewise It appears in an embodied form to some and formless to the others. As a conclusion it appears that the form or formlessness of the Ultimate Reality depends upon the striver's attitude. As a matter of fact the Absolute is unapproachable from any angle whatsoever. It is divine and one without the second.

Personal form of the Absolute is also of two types—one having the modes of nature like *Sat, Raja* and *Tama* and the other possessing all divine qualities. By delving deep we find that both the aspects are perfectly complete.

In a fraction of *Paramātmā* there is existence of *Prakṛti* and its effect—the whole cosmology. Now we should think it over that just as the cosmic appearance appears only in a fraction of *Brahma,* so much so the Rāmalalā is in the lap of Kausalyā and in his mouth there is the whole cosmic creation.

Let us now think this way—In this unending creation we have our own universe; in a corner of this universe is situated our own earth; in a particular portion of this earth we have India located; U.P. in India; Awadha in U.P.; Ayodhya in Awadha; a certain royal palace in Ayodhya; an apartment in that palace; a golden throne in a part of that apartment; the empress Kausalyā sitting on that throne; in her lap the little Rāmalalā; in his mouth the unending creation. This is the way Kākabhuśundi witnessed the situation—innumerable universes. The same way Lord Kṛṣṇa opened his mouth before the mother Yaśodā and she saw everything in his mouth. This leads us

to think that *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa* are not two different entities.

The main thing to be thoroughly understood is—the absolute is attributeless and at the same time having all attributes; formless and at the same time having form; manifest and unmanifest both. How these opposite qualities abide in Him is somehow explained through gross examples.

The fire permeates the wood yet it is invisible but when rubbed it appears; obtains a form. Same is the case with the god almighty.



नमः स्वात्माभिरामाय निर्गुणाय गुणात्मने।
कालरूपिणमीशानमादिमध्यान्तवर्जितम् ॥
समं चरन्तं सर्वत्र मन्ये त्वां पुरुषं परम्।
देव ते चेष्टितं कश्चिन्न वेद नृविडम्बनम्॥

"My obeisance to You who are always engrossed in enjoying Your own form *(Swarūpa)*, who are attributeless and at the same time abode of all the qualities, You are devourer of the universe, controller of the cosmological activities, and without beginning, middle and end. I take You to be the absolute person equally pervading the entire world. O God! nobody can fathom Your pastimes in the human form as You are."

—(*A.R. Kiṣ*. 6. 69-70)

जासु नाम सुमिरत एक बारा। उतरहिं नर भवसिंधु अपारा॥
सोइ कृपालु केवटहि निहोरा। जेहिं जगु किय तिहु पगहु ते थोरा॥२॥

"The same gracious Lord, by uttering whose Name only once men cross the boundless ocean of mundane existence, and for whose three strides the universe proved too small, thus importuned an ordinary boatman."

—*Mānasa*

Lord Rāma: The Humanised Divinity

—Late Sri Hanumanprasad Poddar

जड़ चेतन जग जीव जत सकल राममय जानि।
बंदउँ सब के पद कमल सदा जोरि जुग पानि॥

(*Mānasa* I. 6)

"Whatever beings, animate or inanimate, there are in the universe, recognizing all of them as Śrī Rāma, I ever adore the lotus-feet of all with joined palms."

It is a glorious gift of our culture which is a truth, realized through the divinely intutive knowledge of our sages and seers that they perceive a close fraternal kinship in the entire human race. Not only this but they visualised the relation of fraternity in all living beings whether sentient or insentient. They stretch this ideational process to the extent that they perceive their own self and even God in every object in the universe and they pay their obeisance to each and everyone of them.

Śrīmadbhāgavata says—

खं वायुमग्निं सलिलं महीं च
ज्योतींषि सत्त्वानि दिशो द्रुमादीन्।
सरित्समुद्रांश्च हरेः शरीरं
यत्किं च भूतं प्रणमेदनन्यः॥

"The ether, wind, fire, water and the earth; the luminous bodies in the space, the creatures, the ten quarters, the trees, plants and creepers; rivers and oceans all are bodies of the Lord. We should pay our salutations to whatever is there in the universe."

Tulasīdāsa says—

सीय राममय सब जग जानी । करउँ प्रनाम जोरि जुग पानी॥

(*Mānasa* I. 7. 1)

"Recognizing the entire creation as full of Sītā and Rāma, I make obeisance to them with folded hands."

The two centres wherein the pantheistic and multifaceted culture of India and its very life-breaths are infused, are *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata.* In these two voluminous books so many things—truthful history, the epic poetry with all its grandeur, the form and nature of the attainable, the mundane and spiritual knowledge, the scriptures showing the ultimate means for achieving ultimate object. The spiritual science of liberation, the *Śāstra* of loving devotion, *Dharma Śāstra,* ethics and politics and finally the sociological principles etc., are simultaneously dealt with exhaustively. These jewel like books have collected with the help and support of *Purāṇas* and other scriptures the nectar of knowledge scattered in *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads; Āgama* books and philosophical literature, and made it accessible to all. They made it easy and attractive, and decorating poetically presented in a grand manner. This is why it was possible for the spiritual culture found in aristocratic strata of society to have flowed unbroken to the common stock. For the past several millions in every nook and corner of this great country, many *Ācāryas,* great poets, religious pontiffs, the national leaders, the great politicians and sociologists have drawn inspiration from these books and through their uncommon talent benefited the society in different ways. They left their indelible imprints in the hearts, minds and practical life of people males and females, belonging to the different strata.

In the guise of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* respectively, the eternal truth of eternal India and self-luminous *Ātmapuruṣa* has manifested himself with all his grandeur which is eternal and unimaginable, which can overawe anybody and everybody and had exhibited his sportive activities. There is an astonishing co-ordination of perfect divinity and perfect humanity in the characters of these two. Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa are perfect divinities and at the

same time perfect humans. In their pastimes we will find divinity, playing in and out on one hand and on the other hand we will find in them the humanity in its climax form. The endless grandeur coupled with unlimited sweetness; limitless valour accompanied with ever-new beauty; hardness of thunderbolt wedded to softness of love like a flower; all assimilating fame accompanied with complete pridelessness; being ever active with complete dispassion and detachment horrible oddness with complete evenness many such innumerable self contradictory things and qualities are simultaneously visible.

By studying their character sketches with faith and reverence, brooding and contemplating over them even an ordinary person—male or female can attain to them who are all pervading and at the same time transcendental; the abode of all qualities but quite attributeless; the creator of all the worlds, all embracing but ever beyond the cosmos; the overlord of all, and we can feel their nearness and experience them to be our closest. By meditating on these humanised divine incarnations the devotees could be easily saturated with divine sentiments and make his life completely dedicated to the Lord.

It is through *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* that the man has visualized the supreme reality beyond the limit, incarnated in the form of Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa and made him blessed by the extreme proximity of the Lord. In the personality of Śrī Rāma we witness that the gap between *Bhagavān* and human, *Nara* and *Nārāyaṇa* has been removed and the *Nara* has been introduced to us as perfectly established within *Nārāyaṇa*. It is a contribution from Indian culture to the entire human race that Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa in their *Puruṣottama* form present the deified form of the humanity or the humanised form of divinity behind the curtain of difference between man and God. The Lord *Puruṣottama* incarnating in the form of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, descending among men, have deeply impressed their overlordship on the heart of the whole India and has spiritualized

the Indian culture to the limit. Not only within the four walls of India but anywhere in the world where we find the traces of Indian culture invariably the *Bhāgavata Kathā* has captured the hearts of the people and presented the divine very close to the human beings. Almost in all Indian languages profuse poetic literature has been created based on the *Līlās* of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa among all the literary works based on Śrī Rāma. I find Śrī *Rāmacaritamānasa* quite singular and unique. This unequalled book is the immortal *magnum opus* of Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa a great devotee, superbly wise, liberal of thoughts and the great poet. It is a book useful to all presenting a great ideal before all, flawless and very sacred.

Śrī Rāma is according to Śrī *Rāmacaritamānasa,* not only *Brahma* but the origin of innumerable Mahāviṣṇus and Śivas. It is from his fraction that the numberless trinities emanate and from a fraction of His consort Sītā the countless Ramās, Umās and Brahmāṇīs emerge—

संभु बिरंचि बिष्नु भगवाना। उपजहिं जासु अंस ते नाना॥
X X X
जासु अंस उपजहिं गुनखानी। अगनित लच्छि उमा ब्रह्मानी॥

(*Mānasa* I. 143. 3; 147. 1 1/2)

The body of Lord Rāma is not made of substance but it is existence consciousness bliss embodied, entirely immutable, beyond the ken of *Māyā* and modes of nature. It is self created and the manifestation of existence and consciousness.



कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतँ समाः।
एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे॥

"By doing *Karma,* indeed, should one wish to live here for a hundred years. For a man, such as you (who wants to live thus), there is no way other than this, whereby *Karma* may not cling to you."

—*Īśopaniṣad* (2)

Aspects of Rāma in Vedic Literature

—Prof. Siddheshwar Prasad

In the Indian Literature and tradition there are two main concepts regarding Rāma—(1) The word Rāma as one of the many names of *Brahma*, *Sat*, Ultimate Reality. For example in the famous *Mantra* of the *R. V.* (1.164.46) it has been said—"They speak of Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni; and there is the Divine, five-winged *Garutmat*, The One Existence the wise call by many names as Agni, Yama, Mātariśwan." In many names,the tradition in India has accepted Śiva, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa as the most popular (2) In the Indian tradition the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki and the *Mahābhārata* of Vyāsa have been treated as *Itihāsa*, although both have also been traditionally accepted as *Kāvya-Grantha* and stories of both the epics have been the most popular subject for the writers in India. Rāma and Kṛṣṇa both have been treated as *Brahma* as well as *Avatāra*. Rāma is perhaps the most popular name in India and it has almost travelled around the world.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* speaks of *Rāma* as one of the *Vibhūtis—'Rāmaḥ śastrabhṛtāmaham* (10.31). In his *Bhāṣya* Śaṅkarācārya adds nothing. But in the *Gītā* (11.39) most of the words of the above Mantra of the *R. V.* have been repeated adding only to elucidate that 'Thou art the Lord of Creation'. This makes it clear that with the passage of time the Vedic *Sat* assumes theistic connotations and the functions and attributes of *Brahma* as well as *Avatāra*. Thus Vedic *Upāsanā* becomes *Paurāṇika Bhakti*.

It is clear from the *Bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara that he did not

interpret Rāma as the Ultimate Reality but as the son of Daśaratha who is the hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki. Among the *Ācāryas* perhaps Rāmānuja was the first who held the view that the *Vedas* teach about Nārāyaṇa, Madhvācārya thought that the *Vedas* teach about Viṣṇu, Śrīkaṇṭhācārya and Appaya Dīkṣita that the *Vedas* teach about Śiva. They all lead to the same conclusion—He is one but is known by different names (*R. V.* 1.164.46).

It seems that Rāma is given almost a completely new orientation in the *Skanda Purāṇa* where it is said the one who is the object of the *Vedas* in *Daśarathātmaja* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* is nothing but the *Veda* from the mouth of Vālmīki. Vālmīki was again born as Tulasīdāsa. This has been a part of the popular lore in India.

From this brief preface it becomes clear that *Rāmakathā* is a synthesis of *Veda-dṛṣṭi* and *Loka-dṛṣṭi* and therefore, Vālmīki in his *Rāmāyaṇa* has depicted Rāma both as *Brahma*, as well as the ideal Man, *Dhīrodātta Nāyaka*. In the first *Sarga* of *Bālakāṇḍam* in the form of questions Vālmīki wants to know from the great sage Nārada whether now there is any such great man who is full of human qualities, is a man of vigour, is *Dharmjña, Kṛtajña* and *Satyavāk*, is beautiful, has control over his mind, is bright and without malice and anger but if gets angry even gods are afraid of him. Nārada replied that there is only one such man who possesses all these qualities and he is Rāma, born in the famous dynasty of the *Ikṣvākus*. Who was *Ikṣvāku*? Narrating the tradition of the *Karmayoga* it has been said in the *Gītā* (4.1) that in the beginning of the creation *Bhagavān* had instructed in this *Yoga* Vivasvān, he in turn Manu and he in turn to Ikṣvāku. Rāma was born in this famous dynasty which had inherited the secret of *Karmayoga*. Therefore, in every respect Rāma was extra-ordinary.

One of the most important qualifications of Rāma was that he was '*Veda-Vedāṅga-tattvajña*. This means that the *Vedas* were in existence from before the birth of Rāma. Therefore, the *Vedas* cannot be assumed to contain *Rāma-kathā* in the ordinary sense because they are not *Itihāsa* but are the *Sanātana-dharma*-incarnate.

In this sense the *Vedas* have been co-existing with creation and they are not only the oldest but also contain the highest spiritual realization of man.

Manu tried to lay down the social structure of mankind on the basis of the *Vedas*. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki Rāma is always conscious whether his actions will get approval of Manu. When Tulasīdāsa later on says that both the *Veda* and the *Loka* should be kept in mind it is actually *Manu-smṛti* which he refers to as the *Loka*. Why Manu attached so much importance to the *Vedas?* Because the knowledge of everything (*sarveṣām*) emerges from the *Vedas* (*Manu* 1.21). Here Manu has made it very clear that *Nāma*, *Karma* and *Saṁsthā*—everything began with the *Vedas*. Manu has further said that discrimination of *Karma* and *Dharma* is also based on the *Vedas*.

As is evident from the first *Sarga* of the *Bālakāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki in the character of Rāma both the *Vedas* and the *Smṛti* of Manu got their fullest expression. So historically how one can find *Rāma-kathā* either in the *Vedas* or in the *Smṛti* of Manu?

Transcending Rāma of *Rāma-kathā* treating the word Rāma as one of the many names of, or synonyms of *Brahma*, as Rāmānuja or Rāmānanda and other *Ācāryas* have said the *Vedas* and the *Vedic* literature speak only of Him and none else because nothing exists without Him and everything exists in Him (*Y. V.* 40.1).

Thinking of the aspects of Rāma in the Vedic literature one is naturally drawn to the considerations mentioned above, that is, *Rāma-kathā* is not in the *Vedas* or in the Vedic literature but Rāma, one of the names of *Brahma*, *Sat*, is very much there. As Tulasīdāsa has said they are not two but one; True, but he has also said that the name of Rāma is more powerful than Rāma Himself. So why waste time and energy in *Itihāsa*? Why not go directly to *Rāma-nāma*?



Rāma: A Scientific View of Sāmaveda

—*Balram Kumar Mani Tripathi*

बंदउँ राम नाम रघुबर को। हेतु कृसानु भानु हिमकर को॥

(*Mānasa* I. 18.1)

"We pray to Rāma, the name of Raghubara which is the cause of the fire, the sun and the moon." The birth, life and death depend upon the supreme's wish *Ra* 'Agni', *Ā* 'Sūrya', *Ma* 'Candramā'.

Certainly the source of energy is Rāma. It is immortal endless and infinite. It cannot be destroyed. It is the origin of all mortal or immortal. In *Sāmaveda*—

आदित्प्रत्नस्य रेतसो ज्योतिः पश्यन्ति वासरम्। परो यदिध्यते दिवि॥

(*Āgneya Kāṇḍa* I. 2.10)

"Becoming the sun this fire when arises in *Swarga* every being sees the *Teja* of Sūrya as a life of living world."

उदु त्यं जातवेदसं देवं वहन्ति केतवः। दृशे विश्वाय सूर्यम्॥

(*Āgneya Kāṇḍa* I. 3.11)

"The rays of Jātavedā famous sun promote the sunny fire to look after all the creatures." The fire *Ra*—is the origin, further explains *Sāmaveda*—

अग्ने नक्षत्रमजरमा सूर्यँ रोहयो दिवि। दधज्जयोतिर्जनेभ्यः॥

(*Uttarārcika* XIV.4.4)

"O Agni! Disclosing this world you have launched this dynamic sun in the sky."

Agni is the creator tells *Sāmaveda*—

शेषे वनेषु मातृषु सं त्वा मर्तास इन्धते।
अतन्द्रो हव्यं वहसि हविष्कृत आदिद्देवेषु राजसि॥

(*Āgneya Kāṇḍa* I. 5. 2)

"O Agni! You are everywhere in this universe, invisibly you live in forests, in the womb of mother and in this earth. A *Yājñika* explores you by *Samidhās* with great devotion. O Agnideva! You carry these *Havya* to *Devatās,* living yourself in it.

"Ā—the sun is most dynamic. It can be realised in nuclear fission or fussion. In the interior of the sun there is tremendously high temperature and pressure. Thus under the conditions existing in the solar interior, all molecules and atoms are completely broken up into their constituent parts."

"At higher temperature that are encountered in the solar interior, oxygen atoms, as well as the atoms of all other heavier elements, will be almost completely stripped of all their electron cells and there will be mixture of bare nuclei and free electrons involved in a violent thermal motion."

Disclosing the facts a scientist further says—"At the temperature existing in the solar interior, thermonuclear reactions between hydrogen nuclei (protons) and the nuclei of other light elements can be expected to liberate sufficient amount of nuclear energy to explain the observed radiation of the sun."

The *Sāmaveda Ṛcā* tells the fact—

कायमानो वना त्वं यन्मातृरजगन्नपः।
न तत्ते अग्ने प्रमृषे निवर्तनं यद् दूरे सन्निहाभुवः॥

(*Āgneya Kāṇḍa* I. 5.9)

"O Agni! You are cause to attract the fundamental parts of a matter. You are the creator of water, as a mother. Being invisible you are the cause of chemical or physical combinations.

Again *Sāmaveda* says—

त्रिँ्शद्धाम वि राजति वाक्पतङ्गाय धीयते। प्रति वस्तोरह द्युभिः॥

(*Uttarārcika* XI. 3.3)

As the earth moving around the sun, tries to see and touch the mother sun. The *Indriyas* move to get the *Tejaḥ Rupa* soul.

Coming from universe to an unit the *Sāmaveda* proves this fact. The soul *(Ātmā)* is like the sun and *Indriyas* like the earth;

as the sun tries to touch the earth with its cosmic rays and conducts its life movement, so does the soul.

How descently the conservation of energy and transfer of energy has been told in the *Ṛcā*—

प्र होता जातो महान्नभोविन्नृषद्मा सीददपां विवर्ते।
दधद्यो धायी सुते वया ँ सि यन्ता वसूनि विधते तनूपाः॥

(*Āgneya Kāṇḍa* I. 8. 5)

"This fire is in the sky, in the form of electricity. May learned *Havidhāraka Agni* give you food and grain for your life and may protect your body."

This Agni is the cause of voice. It looks in four forms *Parā, Paśyantī, Madhyamā* and *Vaikharī*. The *Samavedic Ṛcā* says—

पाहि नो अग्न एकया पाह्यउत द्वितीयया।
पाहि गीर्भिस्तिसृभिरूर्जां पते पाहि चतसृभिर्वसो॥

(*Āgneya Kāṇḍa* I. 4. 2)

"O Agni! Protect us by first, give absolute fearlessness by second, give security by third and peace by fourth."

प्र केतुना बृहता यात्यग्निरा रोदसी वृषभो रोरवीति।
दिवश्चिदन्तादुपमामुदानऽपामुपस्थे महिषो ववर्ध॥

(*Āgneya Kāṇḍa* I. 7. 9)

"The great learned Agni, living from the earth to the sky, at the time of pray to *Devatās* makes a noise like bull. Becoming the sun in the sky it spreads light. It flows as current under water." In this way the fire is nothing but the play of electrons. It is a form of energy—light energy,sound energy, electrical energy and kinetic energy etc.

The *Sāmaveda* says—

अग्निर्मूर्धा दिवः ककुत्पतिः पृथिव्या अयम्।
अपा ँ रेता ँ सि जिन्वति
॥

(*Āgneya Kāṇḍa* I. 3.7)

"This fire inspires all the creatures being *Mūrdhā* in *Devatās*. It is higher than sky and master of this earth."

Ra—'Agni' is the creator of this sun, earth, light, electricity, motion, sound and intellect.

Ā—The sun is known as the master of knowledge, the source of energy and inner *Prajñā* (intuition). The sun is also the source of light, motion, heat and working inspirer to all living being. It is the sun which evaporates water and causes rain from which we get food and our cycle of life. It is the master of all planets and stars. It stimulates *Maṇīpūra Cakra* being *Sūrya Nāḍī.*

Our right breath is known as *Sūrya Nāḍī* which plays most important roll in our life. It is the protector of all the creatures, nature and thus universe.

वात जूतो यो अभिरक्षतित्मना प्रजाः पिपर्ति बहुधा विराजति॥

"This sun looks after this universe saves and causes rain. In this way it deserves the highest honour an adoration as protector one."

Ma—The moon (the third letter of Rāma).

The *Sāmaveda* prays telling *Soma*—the other name of moon. The moon is one of the *Tejas.* It becomes annihilator by its cold virtues. A creature without temperature turns to death. Like Maheśwara, the master of annihilation with divine crown on his head of second days moon, its nature is peaceful, pleasant and most attractive. This moon gives power to *Vanaspatis* so that it can be used as medicine. *Somarasa* is a virtuous liquor which was used by *Ṛṣis* for getting immortality, transformation of soul and great pleasure. They become free from illness by using it.

The moon is also the cause of medicine. When the cool light of moon spreads over the *Vanaspatis* (the medicine plants) it gives power to protect the living beings from illness. In this way its qualities are infinite.

सोमः पवते जनिता मतीनां जनिता दिवो जनिता पृथिव्याः।
जनिताग्नेर्जनिता सूर्यस्य जनितेन्द्रस्य जनितोत विष्णोः॥

(*Uttarārcika* V. 6.1)

"Creator of Indra and Viṣṇu this *Soma* is collected in pot. May God like *Soma* the base of knowledge, vide as sky and

earth, the protector of this universe as Viṣṇu and Indra enlighten our soul." *Somarasa* is pious and the nice liquor says *Sāmaveda*—

संवृक्तधृष्णुमुक्थ्यं महामहिव्रतं मदम्। शतं पुरो रुरुक्षणिम्॥

(*Uttarārcika* IV. 1.2)

"May *Soma,* the donar of great pleasure, filler of virtues and protector, give us great pleasure out of illness and our best aim."

"The divine capacity of *Soma* gives power of creativity to *Devatās,* poetic capacity to the poet, knowledge to *Vipra,* health to animals, fastmoving capacity to birds, hunting capacity to hunters. As says *Sāmaveda*—

ब्रह्मा देवानां पदवीः कवीनामृषिर्विप्राणां महिषो मृगाणाम्।
श्येनो गृध्राणा ँ स्वधितिर्वनाना ँ सोमः पवित्रमत्येति रेभन्॥

(*Uttarārcika* V. 6.2)

Living in different forms in *Devatās,* poets, *Ṛṣis (Vipra),* animals, birds, hunters this divine *Soma* is collecting in earthen pot with sound."

In the *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa has said—

गामाविश्य च भूतानि धारयाम्यहमोजसा।
पुष्णामि चौषधीः सर्वाः सोमो भूत्वा रसात्मकः॥

(XV. 13)

"Entering in this earth I protect all the lives on the earth. I also being *Soma* give elixir to protect lives to these *Vanaspatis."*

In this way *Ma* is the moon—an annihilator as well as the protector also. Being *Candranāḍī* in our body it gives peace and spiritual gain.

The *Sāmaveda* praises in the name of *Soma* at its different places and it has been praised in the *Gītā* also.

In *Śloka* 12 of chapter 15 Kṛṣṇa says—

यदादित्यगतं तेजो जगद्भासयतेऽखिलम्।
यच्चन्द्रमसि यच्चाग्नौ तत्तेजो विद्धि मामकम्॥

"The *(Teja)* light in the sun that illumines the entire solar world, and that which shines in the moon and that too which shines in the fire, know that light to be mine."

In *Rāmacaritamānasa,* Rāma is not only a king of Ayodhya, the son of king Daśaratha but also the three letters of Rāma are the symbols of the three powers—the fire, the sun and the moon. Rāma is the master of all these tri-powers, the creator, protector and annihilator. Rāma lives in all this universe living or non living. Rāma permeates everything of this universe.

सीय राममय सब जग जानी। करउँ प्रनाम जोरि जुग पानी॥

(*Mānasa* I. 7.1)

"I bow my head with folded hands to the sacred feet of Siyā Rāma, living in all around us."

"Rāma the magnetic word is most wonderful. In *Japa, Kīrtana* and *Manana* its vibration stimulates the *navel cakra (Maṇipūra),* which burns our evils also digests the food that we take."

अहं वैश्वानरो भूत्वा प्राणिनां देहमाश्रितः।
प्राणापानसमायुक्तः पचाम्यन्नं चतुर्विधम्॥

(*Gītā* XV. 14)

"I being fire of the stomach digest the meal taken by eating, drinking, licking and sucking with the help of *Prāṇa* (ingoing) and *Apāna* (outgoing) breaths."

The vibration of word Rāma stimulates our third eye by which we get complete knowledge of the supreme and experience its presence. We can also get the cosmic rays of supreme power and can go in *Samādhi.*

The vibration of word Rāma in *Ajapājapa* stimulates the secretion of *Somarasa* collected in *Sahasrār Cakra* (in the upper head of a person). It gives spiritual power, great pleasure and peace.

The three letters of Rāma are secret powers hidden in an atom and in this universe too. All types of energy, matter, space and time is not beyond this Rāma.

"Rāma is the supreme. Its vibration affects the whole body, mind, intellect and an atom to universe, the complete *Carācara Jagat.*

मयाध्यक्षेण प्रकृतिः सूयते सचराचरम्।



Rāma: As Depicted in the Upaniṣads

—*Prof. Dr. B. P. Verma 'Kamal'*

Out of all the *Upaniṣads* available these days, there are only three such in which the image of Rāma and the various procedures of His worship have been depicted. They are—(1) *Śrī Rāma Pūrvatāpinyupaniṣad* (2) *Śrī Rāma Uttaratāpinyupaniṣad* (3) *Rāmopaniṣad*. There is another *Upaniṣad*, the fourth one—*Śrī Sītopaniṣad*, which especially deals with the image of *Bhagavatī* Sītā. In this *Upaniṣad* the name of *Bhagavān* Rāma has been mentioned in the background of the power and grace of *Bhagavatī* Sītā.

In the beginning of *Rāmapūrvatāpinyupaniṣad* the derivative meaning of the name of *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma has been explained. Here it has been clearly mentioned that although *Brahma* is *Cinmaya*, equal to none, *Aprākṛta*, and above all the attributes (*Triguṇātīta*), still he appears in a physical form to perform the desired work of his devotees. That *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma is full of light and above the limitations of time, space and objects.

In the *Mantra* 'रां रामाय नम:', 'रां' is the seed, 'रकार' is indicative of 'राम' and the 'आ' 'म्' and 'अ ' denote the three deities Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva alongwith their powers. In this *Mantra* 'नम:' indicates 'जीव' the word 'राम' denotes 'आत्मा ' and 'आय' denotes the unification of 'जीव' and 'आत्मा'. In this way the six lettered other *Mantras* 'क्लीं रामाय नम:', 'ह्रीं रामाय नम:', and 'ॐ रामाय नम:' are indicative of the *Kāma Rūpa*, the *Māyā Rūpa* and the *Oṁkāra Rūpa* of *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma.

That *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma, when conjoins the graceful and dignified *Bhagavatī* Śrī Sītājī, then this 'अग्निषोमात्मक' i. e., *Prakṛti Puruṣātmaka* universe is born. The blue complexioned *Bhagavān*

Śrī Rāma is clad with yellow costumes and wears *Jaṭājūṭa* on his head. *Bhagavatī* Sītā, his *Āhlādinī Śakti* is seated to his left side, fully decorated with glittering ornaments. On his right side stands his younger brother Lakṣmaṇa who is equipped with a bow and arrows and golden light engulfs his form. This triangular form of *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma is to be worshipped by his devotees.

Here, meditation of *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma has been prescribed in the following form. *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma, the *Saccidānanda* God stands in the posture of a preceptor with 'ज्ञानमयी धनुर्मुद्रा' in his right hand and 'तेजोमयी धनुर्मुद्रा' in his left hand. To his northern and southern sides Śatrughna and Bharatajī stand respectively. Hanumānjī stands with his hands folded as a listener. Below Bharatajī and Satrughnajī are Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa respectively. On the back side of *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma, Lakṣmaṇajī stands with 'छत्र' and 'चँवर'. In this way, the hexagonal shaped *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma is surrounded by the first 'आवरण' consisting of his long sounded *Bījamantras*—"रां , रीं, रूं, रैं, रौं, रः".

The second 'आवरण'consists of Vāsudeva, Śānti, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Śrī Pradyumna, Sarasvatī, Aniruddha and Rati. Hanumān, Sugrīva, Bharata, Vibhīṣaṇa, Lakṣmaṇa, Aṅgada, Jāmbavān and Śatrughna have been enumerated in the third 'आवरण'. The fourth 'आवरण' of *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma consists of Indra, Agni, Yama,'निर्ऋति' Varuṇa, Vāyu, Candramā, Īśāna, Brahmā and Ananta—all the ten *Dikpālas*. Their *Bīja Mantras* are—" लं, रं, सं, क्षं ,वं , यं, शं , हं, आं " and 'नं' respectively.

Thereafter the *Pūjā Yantra* and its various organs have been elaborately described here. Thereafter a forty seven lettered *Mālā Mantra* has been referred to. That is "ॐ नमो भगवते रघुनन्दनाय रक्षोघ्नविशदाय मधुरप्रसन्नवदनामिततेजसे बलाय रामाय विष्णवे नमः ॐ" This *Mālā Mantra* has to be incorporated in the above mentioned *Pūjā Yantra* at proper place and time. Those persons who worship it, they are blessed with a long and healthy life, son 'ऐश्वर्य' *Artha*, *Dharma* and *Kāma* besides 'मोक्ष' (liberation). This is a close secret full of mystery which must

not be divulged to persons indulged in worldly affairs.

Thereafter, the process of worship of the said *Pūjā Yantra* with *Saṅkalpa* and *Anuṣṭhāna* has been described in great details. Instructions have been given to worship *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma with full formality like *Dvārapūjā*, *Padmāsana*, *Bhūtaśuddhi*, *Prāṇapratiṣṭhā*, *Mātṛkānyāsa* etc. After performing *Pūjā* the *Japa* has to be surrendered in the right hand accompanied with prayers and *Kṣamā Yācanā*. Those who worship *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma in this way, they having derived all worldly pleasures attain the *Paramapada* of *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma in the end.

In the beginning of the *Rāmottaratāpinyupaniṣad* 'Kashi' has been named as *Avimukta Kṣetra* and described as abode of Lord Śiva. It is he who realised the importance of *Bhagavān* Rāma and devoted himself to the recitation of the latter's name. Lord Śiva is the foremost singer of *Rāma Nāma*. He is capable of giving *Mokṣa* (salvation) even to the insects living in the *Avimukta Kṣetra* Kashi only due to his devotion to *Rāma Nāma*. According to Him (Lord Śiva) the name of Rāma is essentially the *Tāraka Mantra* which is whispered into the ears of living beings for their liberation. This mystery is known only to Lord Śiva and none else.

That *Nāma Mantra* of *Bhagavān* Rāma is six lettered "रां रामाय नमः". This is the real *Tāraka Mantra*. Besides this, there are other two *Mantras* with the name of *Bhagavān* Rāma—(1) 'रामचन्द्राय नमः' and 'रामभद्राय नमः' . They are also considered to be *Tāraka Mantras*. These three *Mantras* respectively represented 'ॐ', 'तत्' and 'ब्रह्म ' and are symbolic of 'सत्', 'चित्' and 'आनंद'.

Thereafter the *Upaniṣad* deals with the four *Pādas* (पाद) of *Oṁkāra Svarūpa Puruṣottama* Rāma . The first *Pāda* (पाद) is Śrī Lakṣmaṇa, Being the representative of *Jāgrat Avasthā* or the 'स्थूल जगत् ' and being the rest house of the universe, he has been given the name of *Vaiśvānara* (वैश्वानर) consequently, in order to obtain Rāma it is essential to worship Lakṣmaṇa.

Śrī Śatrughna is the second 'पाद' or part 'अंश' of the *Pūrṇa Brahma* Rāma. As Lakṣmaṇa shoulders the heavy weight of 'स्थूल

जगत्' (crude universe), so Śatrughna carries the heavy weight of 'सूक्ष्म जगत्' over his head. In this way Śatrughna is the 'अंत:प्रज्ञ' deity in the form of 'तैजस' being the presiding deity of 'कामरूप स्वप्नावस्था'.

Śrī Bharatajī forms the third 'पाद' or 'अंश' of *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma, who is the presiding deity of 'सुषुप्ति अवस्था' or 'प्रलयावस्था'. The state of 'स्थितप्रज्ञता' is the period of 'सुषुप्ति' (sound sleep). In order to obtain Rāma, Bharatajī is a great assistant. Thus Bharatajī has been told 'महाप्रज्ञ, आनंदमय' and 'चेतोन्मुख'.

According to this *Upaniṣad*, *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma, who has been depicted in the three *Pādas* above, is the Supreme God. He is himself the fourth *Pāda* of *Advaita Tattva* and *Para Brahma*. Such *Oṁkāra Svarūpa*, *Jyotisvarūpa* and *Saccidānandaghanasvarūpa*, is *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma. He who worships such Śrī Rāma gets liberated from the cycle of birth and death.

This story has been narrated by Yājñavalkyajī to Bharadvāja *Ṛṣi*. Again Yajñavalkyajī has narrated it to Atri *Muni*. According to Bharadvājajī Lord Śiva worshipped Rāma in Kashi for thousand *Manvantaras* reciting *Rāma Mantra* and liberated all the creatures by dint of the six lettered (षडक्षर) *Tāraka Mantra*.

Here again we find the story of Rāma giving instructions to Brahmājī and of Brahmājī offering prayers to Rāma with 47 *Mantras*. These *Mantras* have been termed as 'मंत्रराज'. Thus, it has been established that those who offer prayers to *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma by these *Mantras*, obtain immortality (अमरत्व).

Śrī Rāmopaniṣad is a very short *Upaniṣad*. Here we find in the beginning about the form and components of *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma and importance of *Rāma Mantra*. Removing the doubts of *Yogīs*, like Sanaka and devotees of Viṣṇu like Prahlāda, Hanumānjī has described *Bhagavān* Rāma as *Parama Brahma* (Supreme God) and *Tāraka Brahma* (the liberating God). Here it has been said that doing *Japa* of *Rāma Mantra*, without worshipping the different components of *Bhagavān* Rāma—like Śrī Sītājī, Lakṣmaṇajī, Hanumānjī, Vibhīṣaṇa, Sugrīva, Aṅgada, Jāmbavān and Śrī Bharatajī—the worship does not bear

any fruit and creates a lot of troubles.

Thereafter light has been thrown on the rights of household (गृहस्थ), *Brāhmaṇas* on *Praṇava*. *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma has himself explained to Hanumān, on being questioned about it, that I bestow my blessings upon those who perform the *Japa*, of *Praṇava*, having 'अकार, उकार, मकार' and 'अर्द्धमात्रा' alongwith Rāmacandra. Lastly mention has been made of *Śrī Rāma Pañcayaḥ*, composed by Vibhīṣana. A *Jīva* becomes 'कृतकृत्य' if he knows the *Mantras* laid down in it systematically.

In the second part of *Śrī Rāmopaniṣad* light has been thrown on the simple methods of obtaining Śrī Rāma on being questioned by Vibhīṣaṇa, *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma has said that he who cannot follow the whole *Rāmaparicayaḥ* composed by you, should perform *Japa* of at least five *Daṇḍakas* or of my name (Rāma) in 96 crore numbers. He becomes sinless by doing so. Those who cannot even do this much, should perform *Japa* of *Rāma Mantra* having prefixed and suffixed with *Praṇava* in fifteen lakh numbers. In this way, he who performs *Japa* of *Praṇava* twice of *Rāma Mantra* obtains the form of Rāma. Those who cannot even do this much, should perform 'पुरश्चरण' of three footed *Gāyatrī*. And those who cannot even do this much, should do *Pāṭha* of *Rāmagītā* and *Rāma Sahasranāma* or perform *Japa* of *Rāma Nāma* in 108 numbers or do *Pāṭha* of *Śrī Rāma Stavarāja* as told by *Devarṣi* Nārada or do *Pāṭha* (recitation) of *Mantrarājātmaka Stotra* and *Sītā Stuti* composed by Hanumān or do *Pāṭha* of *Rāma Rakṣā Stotra*. Those who worship Me and offer prayers to Me by these *Stotras* undoubtedly obtain Me and take My form."

In this way, we see that *Bhagavān* Śrī Rāma has been depicted as 'परम ब्रह्म परमात्मा' '(Supreme God) in the above mentioned *Upaniṣads*. Much emphasis has been laid down on His 'वैधी भक्ति' and 'अद्वैतोपासना'. Besides this, stress has been laid down on the importance of this six lettered *Mantra*, better known as *Tāraka Mantra*, prayers told by Brahmājī have been termed

as *Mantrarāja*. Much light has been thrown on the importance of *Pūjā Yantra*, with its organs and methods have been described for performing its 'पूजा' with due 'अनुष्ठान'. The life of a human-being is meaningful only if and when he liberates himself from the cycle of birth and death, by performing only one of the above mentioned form of worship offered to Śrī Rāma.



स य एवमेतद्यज्ञायज्ञीयमङ्गेषु प्रोतं वेदाङ्गी भवति नाङ्गेन विहूर्छति सर्वमायुरेति ज्योग्जीवति महान्प्रजया पशुभिर्भवति महान्कीर्त्या संवत्सरं मज्ज्ञो नाश्नीयात्तद्व्रतं मज्ज्ञो नाश्नीयादिति वा॥

"He who thus knows this *Yajñā-Yajñīya* (*Sāma*) as fully established on the constituents of the body, he becomes possessed of all the physical constituents, he does not get any part of his body crippled. He gets a full span of life, lives brightly, becomes great through the possession of progeny (and) animals, (and becomes) great in fame. His vow should be not to eat meats for a year, or not to eat meats forever."

—*Chāndogyopaniṣad* (I. 19.2)

तपःश्रद्धे ये ह्युपवसन्त्यरण्ये
शान्ता विद्वांसो भैक्ष्यचर्यां चरन्तः।
सूर्यद्वारेण ते विरजाः प्रयान्ति
यत्रामृतः स पुरुषो ह्यव्ययात्मा॥

"Those who live in the forest, while begging for alms—viz., those (forest-dwellers and hermits) who resort to the duties of their respective stages of life as well as to meditation—and the learned (householders) who have their senses under control—(they) after becoming freed from dirt, go by the path of the sun to where lives that *Puruṣa*, immortal and undecaying by nature."

—*Muṇḍakopaniṣad* (I. 2.11)

Hey Rāma!

—Satish Kumar Shukla

The world—the whole immeasurable existence
They say is but a blip
In Viṣṇu's sovereign moods.
He—the all encompassing undescribable
Wesen rests upon His Śeṣa throne
Ever playing with His Muse.
He for once hits upon another stance;
In the maze of His Creations
In the vast space of Time
With its layer upon layer of endlessness
And the plethora of codes
Should be traceable too He considers
A point, a clear well defined point
That orients, Pole star on the horizon
Of His mortal world.

So is Rāma conceived
To represent in human life perfection
Maryādā—life as it ought to be,
A summit of top virtue.
This king of kings
Is born a mortal
To lead, to fill life with sublime meaning
To take man
To dizzying heights of high moral.
And for the drama of creation to enfold
In its finest manifestation.

No miracles! Nothing so very divine
This time, promises Viṣṇu to Himself
Just the prince, the king the kingdom
And kingdom's commonest of problems—
As is the wont.

The stage was set
Set the coronation's day
As envy overtook times pious rhythm
Between the throne and contrived exile
Stood the crown prince.
Not a wink of hesitation
Not a moment of self-doubt
As Rāma opts to go.
Leaving mortal morals challenge behind
conquered and redefined.

O worldly men! Look!
A son shall so bow
In deference to his father's vow.
It was no less so
As Vibhīṣaṇa sought
His refuge; an enemy
In own ranks, Beware!
This is some subterfuge,
Cried his generals.
But Rāma knows! He decrees:

He shall stay!
Established custom hold sway
Even when Rāvaṇa were to come and pray.
O worldly men!
This is heroic
Unsurpassed valour to this day.

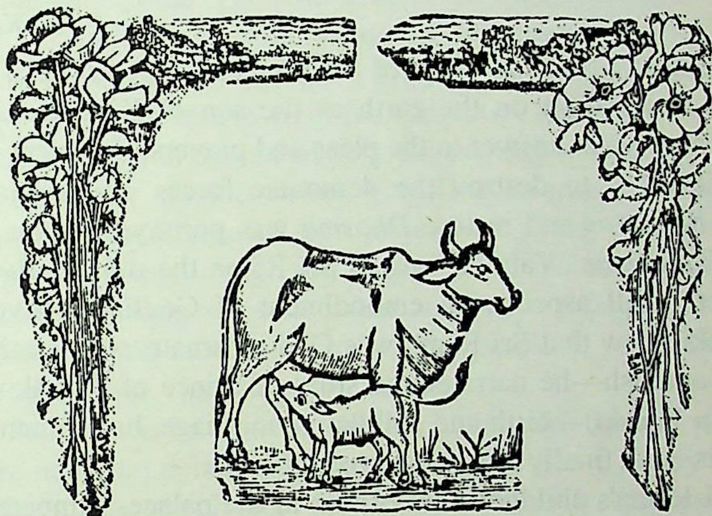
Rāma scales new heights of courtesy
As Hanumān takes his leave;
O Hanumān! May all your kindness
To me sink within me!
Never may you be in need!
So much I thank Thee.

What an ethical life!
What an honour
Upon the soul of Mother-India!
That such a man was born
To its womb
Such virtue played upon its breast
Such holy feet sanctified India's dust.
Setting in every of life's walks
Sublime standards of mortal conduct.

What an ethical life
In the crowning life's test
Is now Rāma torn
Between censure and His most faithful wife.
Look! O worldly men!
The king makes his sacrifice
To upkeep his conscience's behest
Banishing Sītā to the forest.

The earth shook
As this peerless display of *Dharma*
Was rivalled by Sītā's last act.
She chooses immortality, she chooses death
That Rāma may hold His head high
In the drama of human life.

So it comes
As our mortal journey ends
As we lift our last step
We have, we want
Hey Rāma to adore our lip
As too our last breath.



Śrī Ayodhyāpati Rāma—Brahma Jñānī

—*P. R. Kamath*

Vālmīki's beatific vision of Śrī Rāma as an *Avatāra* of Lord Viṣṇu descending on the earth as the son of King Daśaratha and Kausalyā in answer to the pleas and prayers of ancient sages and devotees to destroy the demoniac forces of Rāvaṇa and other *Rākṣasas* and restore *Dharma* was portrayed in the great epic *Rāmāyaṇa*. Vālmīki saw in Śrī Rāma the *Ādarśa Puruṣa*-perfect in all aspects, an embodiment of Godliness. Even as Vālmīki knew that Śrī Rāma was God incarnate, with a mission to accomplish—he narrated the story of Prince of Ikṣwāku race (*Raghu Vaṁśa*)—birth and childhood, marriage, banishment and travails and finally conquest over Rāvaṇa.

Śrī Rāma's childhood was spent in the palace, pampered by parents and courtiers and a large number of teachers to bring him up as a king, expert in Vedic texts and use of arms (bow and arrows). The period must have been very taxing; Śrī Rāma told Vasiṣṭha—

"In boyhood there is fear from the preceptor, the mother and father.

Men and elder children become an abode of fear"

Śrī Rāma went on a pilgrimage at the age of six to see around outside the four walls of the palace and saw for the first time life in the world at large. Thousands of years later the above scene repeated when Gautama Prince of Kapilavastu left his palace and family to experience the reality of life among the common people.

When Śrī Rāma returned from his sojourn, he pondered over

the actualities and transitoriness of life, its subservience to changes in living with passage of time and man's helplessness to resist changes occurring to him. Pondering over the inevitable happenings on which there is no control, Śrī Rāma went into depression, pensive and isolated himself from palace activities causing no small concern to his father, King Daśaratha. Just at that time Sage Viśvāmitra came to King Daśaratha asking him for protection from bands of *Rākṣasas* who fouled the attempts of *Sādhus* to perform *Yajñas*. He wanted Prince Rāma to go alongwith him to fight the *Rākṣasas*, and in turn he would train Śrī Rāma in the use of very devastating weapons in archery and the art of administration. The King informed the Sage that he would go alongwith him instead of young Rāma because Rāma was going through self introspection and was in meditating moods. The king suggested that alongwith *Rājaguru* Vasiṣṭha, Vālmīki could help to resolve his problems, answering his questions and clarifying his doubts.

Sage Vasiṣṭha assured the King that Śrī Rāma's problems were not from delusion because Śrī Rāma was a highly evolved soul, but a search for the Reality through dispassion and discrimination. When Śrī Rāma faced the Sages—He said 'I am devoid of knowledge but I reflect on life as I see.' Men are born to die and go through a cycle of births and deaths—Why is this cycling. What then is real and permanent? Who am I and what is the use of kingdom and enjoyments to me, when I know it is a matter of time when everything perishes. When does sorrow end?

Rāma continued his enquiries:

"Life is transient like the accumulated dew on a grass blade. It drops down and disappears.

The reading of scriptures becomes a burden without discrimination. Knowledge is a burden for one without discrimination. It only builds Ego. Mind is a burden for one without peace; it is like uncontrolled boat in sea. Body is a

burden for one who does not know Self (without self-realisation). Ego is calamitous because it sprouts desires; Ego is man's worst enemy. Desires destroy the best of men; the man with desires is like a dry straw. Woman (Man) is a body caged in a bony skeleton, a puppet in muscle and flesh; Why is the attraction to such a body (woman)?

Life-stages overlap—childhood is swallowed by youth which in turn is swallowed by old age and finally death. Why this mutual cruelty? The passage of time cannot be controlled by Man or God. Life depends on Time. Time controls life itself even the Universe; the seasons; growth and decay. Time has attained the nature of Supreme Being; with time even the oceans dry up; mountains are shattered; stars are fissioned to bits; Brings fortune in one moment and misfortune next moment; Birth in the beginning and death with the passage of time.

Please tell me the Reality in all this; I do not rejoice at life or death. Is there a process of getting out of this time bound cycle and free from Ego. If there is no way out, I shall remain in silence as one framed in a drawing."

The sages were immensely pleased with the questions because such enquiries were made by earlier seers from Naciketā, Śuka (son of Vyāsa) onwards who had achieved inner tranquility by meditating on *Brahman*, the Ultimate Reality by dispassion and discrimination. Vasiṣṭha then explained to Śrī Rāma, *Brahman* as the Supreme consciousness that exists when the immovable and movable worlds vanish alongwith light and darkness. Eternally existant and unborn, *Brahman* has only a subtle body (*Ātivāhika*) and not the material one. The material world with *Ādhibhautika* body (physical, material) is only conceived by mind—which is the store house of impressions and imagination.

The old sage proceeded to describe the signs of 'Liberated' person. He is said to be liberated, though having an occupation, for whom the universe is only a void. He, who is awake in

deep sleep and his perception is free from mental impressions. Even as he is involved in living through moods of anger, hate, love, fear and the like, he is extremely pure like the sky which is pure consciousness. He who acts without ego, is free from joy and sorrow, is a liberated person. The liberated is one, in whom the ripples of worldly existence are stilled and although possessing a mind, is free from thoughts. *Brahman* is the nature of pure consciousness free from things perceived, boundless, eternal, non-decaying, without blemish and existing as the all pervading space.

Even as a young boy Śrī Rāma had realised that the material world was unreal, the pleasures which a person sought were transitory, perishable and more present in the mind of man than in actuality. On meeting the Sages and listening to their words of wisdom Śrī Rāma imbibed the universality of *Brahman* (*sarvam khalu idaṁ Brahma*). While in mortal existence, he lived a dual existence—carrying out his duties as a Prince, son, husband and warrior...and living in his '*Antarātmā*' in total tranquility and peace. All actions attributed to Śrī Rāma as the hero of the epic were in fulfilment of the Destiny and aim of his visitation—to kill Rāvaṇa and to re-establish *Dharma*. It is by assuming human form with all the imperfections associated with it and conquering the strongest enemy Śrī Rāma set the example for the world of men. It should also be remembered that Rāvaṇa had secured a boon that he would not be killed by Gods except by mortals. The Lord had therefore assumed the human form to destroy Rāvaṇa and honoured the boon. Rāvaṇa was so sure of his strength that he held no fears for any creature—least of all a monkey or man.

For students of mythology the dual existence of the great and holy will not surprise. 'Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak' describes the strange phenomenon. Critical incidents most unlikely even among worldly people were reported for example: Jamadagni asking Paraśurāma to behead the mother, King

Parīkṣit to die from cobra bite from a curse, Viśwāmitra falling in love with Menakā, Ahalyā converted into a *Śilā* (stone) for infidelity etc. Orthodox blue blooded devotees convince themselves into believing that the God-incarnate should be perfect even when he assumes the mortal frame. They believed that the benefit to humanity would then be minimised from Holy Visitations of the Lord. In fact 'It is by assuming the human form and associating with erring humanity God confers the choicest benefits on the world of men by precept and example.'

Many authors of the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* and commentators of 19th century onwards and even earlier had Lord Kṛṣṇa in mind when they critically examined actions of Vālmīki's Rāma. In *Kṛṣṇāvatāra* the Lord did not mince forms or words. *Bhagavad Gītā* asserts in every chapter and verse that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the *Pūrṇa Avatāra* of Lord Viṣṇu and demonstrates to Arjuna his *Viśwarūpa*, if proof was wanted. Nobody would therefore question the miracles—killing of Pūtanā, Śakatāsura, Kāliya when the lord was Bālakṛṣṇa or ask why Lord Kṛṣṇa with almighty power did not kill Kaṁsa or the Kauravas with his *Sudarśana Cakra*, when he showed his impatience with Śiśupāla. No one in their heart of hearts would ever doubt the power of almighty Lord to destroy evil and establish *Dharma*. Elaborate characterisation brought in to the epic by Vālmīki and Vyāsa is for the benefit of devotees who will obtain the pervasive nature of divine authority.

When Viṣṇu decided to be born on this earth as son of King Daśaratha he asked his consort Lakṣmī to join him, born out of the earth as Sītā and brought up by King Janaka as his daughter. Sītā was gentle, tolerant, stress bearing like *Prakṛti* to Rāma's overpowering *Puruṣatwa*. Sītā was about 6 years when she was led to Swayamvara and Śrī Rāma was 15-16. The rival suitors had the Ten Headed Rāvaṇa amongst them and Rāvaṇa was reported to be over thousand years of age. When Vālmīki wrote in his epic how repeatedly Sītā, on her return from *Aśoka*

Vana, was questioned by Śrī Rāma about her relations with the mighty Rāvaṇa, in the presence of Rāma's victorious army, she asked Lakṣmaṇa to prepare an *Agni Kuṇḍa* which she would enter to prove her fidelity.

Rt. Hon Śrīnivāsa Śāstrī rejects apologetic interpretations given to justify Rāma's continued apprehensions about Sītā's infidelity and proposes that as a King of the *Raghu Vaṁśa* and a husband it was natural for him to show his misgivings although in his heart he knew Sītā was immaculately pure. Again, when Vālmīki brought her to the court dressed in *Valkala* and Śrī Rāma wanted her to swear on oath about her purity, it was the last straw on the camel's back. With down cast eyes Sītā invoked Mother Earth to open up and receive her, asserting that she never let her thoughts wander away from her Lord and earth was no place for her.

Enlightened readers of this century have noticed that Sītā had a will of her own and her Consort Rāma treated her as a friend and partner whenever they had to take major decisions. She was very assertive when Śrī Rāma wanted her to live in Ayodhya and refused to stay behind. She guided him in his dealings with *Sādhus* in hermitage. As a good daughter of Janaka she did not complain or find fault with her husband when he was openly suspicious, because the moral standards in those years (6-8,000 years ago) were very high and as the wife of Prince Rāma she had to prove herself before the bar of public opinion. Lord Rāma who had accomplished the main goal of his mission (killing of Rāvaṇa) was really fastidious to establish the code of conduct, for the posterity to observe.

We have to accept the truth of the matter explained in *Gītā*:

अवजानंति मां मूढा मानुषीं तनुमाश्रितम्।
परं भावमजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम्॥

The actions, words and gestures of the Lord, who even as a boy surpassed the *Yogīs* and realised *Brahman*, are difficult to comprehend; the finite mind cannot understand the infinite.

The delusion disappears when we consider Śrī Rāma as *Puruṣa* and Sītā as *Prakṛti*. They are beyond the *Triguṇas* and are of infinite dimensions.

It is the fortune of this Bhāratavarṣa that these *Avatāras* (Manifestations of the Supreme Lord) were born on this land to light the path of *Dharma*.



अहो विचित्रं तव राम चेष्टितं
मनुष्यभावेन विमोहितं जगत्।
चलस्यजस्त्रं चरणादिवर्जितः
सम्पूर्ण आनन्दमयोऽतिमायिकः॥

"Hey Rāma! Your activities are unintelligible. Due to your human form, the entire world is deluded. You always move on even though without legs. You are the bliss solidified and the biggest conjurer."

—(*A.R. Bāl.* 5.44)

चौ०—प्रभु प्रसाद सुचि सुभग सुबासा। सादर जासु लहइ नित नासा॥
तुम्हहि निबेदित भोजन करहीं। प्रभु प्रसाद पट भूषन धरहीं॥१॥
सीस नवहिं सुर गुरु द्विज देखी। प्रीति सहित करि बिनय बिसेषी॥
कर नित करहिं राम पद पूजा। राम भरोस हृदयँ नहिं दूजा॥२॥
चरन राम तीरथ चलि जाहीं। राम बसहु तिन्ह के मन माहीं॥

"Abide, O Rāma, in the mind of those whose nose devoutly inhales every day the fragrance of sacred and lovely offerings (in the shape of flowers, sandal-paste, etc.) made to their Lord (Yourself). Who eat only that which has been offered to You and put on clothes and ornaments first dedicated to You, whose heads bow down most submissively and lovingly at the sight of a god, preceptor or Brahman, whose hands adore Śrī Rāma's feet every day, who cherish in their heart faith in Rāma and none else, and whose feet take them to holy places associated with Rāma."

—*Mānasa*

Philosophical Inquest into the Supremacy of Rāma Tattva

(Gist of a Conversation on Rāma)

—P. Ramachandrachar

Q:—Rāma was a Valiant King; a just ruler and a good administrator. What is wrong in this?

A:—It is a gross under-estimation of a great personality.

Q:—How? Please explain.

A:—If that were the case, his story would have found only a page or at best a chapter in the History of this land; like the histories of Candragupta Maurya, Aśoka, Vikramāditya, HarṣaVardhana, Śivājī and many other kings.

Q:— So it is! what is the difference?

A:—(1) His name appears in all the ancient holy scriptures, Epics, mythological texts, legends and in all aspects of literature in all the languages of India with divine reverence. (2) He is hailed in rituals; sung in music, carved in sculputure; painted in art and worshipped in temples by millions everyday. (3) His glory is influencing our family life at home; and is blended with our social and national life. Our culture cannot think of being separated from him. (4) He has been praised, meditated, preached and adored by mendicants, scholars, saints, singers, mystics, devotees and *Yogīs* of all ages right from the pre-historic age. They have found solace in chanting his name; rapture in listening to his story and peace in his memory again and again. (5) Babies have been lulled to sleep by his song and the younger generation is getting inspiration for the future. Śivājī was an example for this.

Q:—Please do not be angry; if I call all this as "Mass Hysteria" or a "Blind Belief of Mentally upset" persons.

A:—Anger or any other excitement is prohibited in the probe for truth. Such people are unfit for any sane and sincere discussion. "Mass" means common folk; not all. 'Hysteria' is not a longstanding phase. Mentally upset people cannot have any regular and disciplined life.

Surely, you cannot call Vasiṣṭha, Viśwāmitra; Gautama, Śatānada, Agastya and scores of other sages who were the contemporaries and close associates of Rāma as mentally upset or men 'suffering from hysteria'. Hanumān was a great scholar of Grammar, *Vedas* and a wise person in all spheres of life. He was strong both in body and mind. Such a unique person served Rāma dispassionately throughout his life! Did he ask for any worldly thing in return? Lakṣmaṇa who abandoned his wife and luxurious palace-life went with Rāma to the jungle with all its sufferings to serve him only. His mother blessed and encouraged him. He even endured the piercing taunts and abuses of Sītā in the incidents of the Golden Deer and her kidnapping. Vedavyāsa describes the holy story of Rāma in all the *Purāṇas* and *Mahābhārata*. The Great Ācāryas, Philosophers, Scholars, Poets, Dramatists and saints have sung his glory. Vivekānanda, Tilakajī Mahārāja and even the father of the nation Mahātmā Gāndhī were devotees of Rāma. Do you mean to say that they were all mentally upset people? or...?

Q:—I am sorry, I mean to say that what they adored was not Rāma the son of Daśaratha but Rāma the 'God Supreme'. Further, even before that, I say that Rāma as a person did never exist. He was only an imaginary character created by a great poet Vālmīki.

A:—(1) In that case, he would have met the same fate of the Gods and heroes created by Homer in his 'Illiad and Odyssey'; or by Virgil in 'Aeneid'. No body worships them.

(2) Secondly B. G. Tilaka, M. K. Gāndhī and others, you have mentioned, have not stated that their Rāma was not the son of Daśaratha. Let us come to it later.

(3) Vālmīki and Rāma were contemporaries. He brought up the two children of Rāma. He was in no obligation of Rāma. He was not a court-poet. He lived in his *Āśrama* away from the city of Ayodhya. He had no reason to exaggerate anything about Rāma.

(4) The Historicity of Rāma is proved by the facts that thousands of places where Rāma went, sat, stayed and took food, are identified and considered as holy places. There are temples where he is worshipped and the ruins of the Bridge of Rāma is a striking proof in this regard.

Q:—There are innumerable *Rāmāyaṇas* like *Ānanda*, *Adbhuta*, *Adhyātma* etc., and besides there are *Rāmāyaṇas* written by Jains, Buddhists and others. The stories in them widely differ and are some time even contradictory. It is said that there are *Śatakoti* (One hundred crores) of *Rāmāyaṇa's* which is the authority?

A:—The *'Ādi Mahākāvya'* is the *Rāmāyaṇa* written by Vālmīki, that he was contemporary of Rāma is an added proof. There was no considerable work on the history of Rāma before him. Even the later *Rāmāyaṇas* have in no way, belittled his personality, eventhough they have raised the character of Rāvaṇa to the height of a tragic hero.

Q:—This seems convincing: but Vālmīki was only a poet and poetry is defined as "Spontaneous out-flow of powerful feelings". Besides such epics contain exaggerations, imaginations, alterations or change of incidents. There can be too much sentimentation and descriptions which cloud the truth. Can they be called as exact facts like that of Science?

A:—Your definition of poetry is limited to the worldly works. The works of those who are great *Yogīs* contain, "Powerful burst of light that flashes out from a meditating mind". For them the real poet is 'God', 'नानृषिः कुरुते काव्यं।' they feel that they are only pens of God to write with. They are called "*Vara Kavis*" i.e., gifted poets, not "*Nara-Kavis*" or

'human poets' only a *Ṛṣi* can write a longstanding and venerable work. A *Ṛṣi* is a person who has direct cognition of Truth that too very deeply. For them *Kāvya* is said to be 'वाक्यं रसात्मकं काव्यं। or रमणीयार्थ प्रतिपादक: शब्द: काव्यं' i. e., that work whose central theme is '*Rasa*' (Sentiment) which is God Himself—'रसौ वै स:' declare the *Vedas* who is the real poet? *Gītā* says "कविं पुराणं अनुशासितारं...." God is *Kavi* (Poet) etc., the embodiment of knowledge.

At the very beginning of *Rāmāyaṇa* the Divine sage Nārada comes to Vālmīki. Nārada is hailed in *Gītā* as "Among the celestial sages I am Nārada" i. e., he excels other Divine sages in possession and exhibition of divinity. He was a master of penance and a good orator. Vālmīki, the leader of saints asks him about the Greatest person of the world. Then Nārada narrates briefly the story of Rāma. Can they have the intension of deceiving the world by telling the world untruth; or only a story for entertainment? Besides Brahmā the creator blessed Vālmīki with direct visual cognition of the incidents of *Rāmāyaṇa*. Poetic features or characteristics cannot cloud the truth. Further which is more 'रमणीयार्थ' (highly entertaining) than the name and history of God? In his opinion Rāma is the real Supreme incarnated.

Q:-The Supreme Truth or *Brahman* is 'All pervading i. e., Viṣṇu. It is unlimited and shapeless. Any shape is bound by space and time. How can the unchangeable assume forms which are bound by space and time? How can it enter the womb of a woman? What for? It is degrading the Supreme and so Rāma cannot be God.

A:—Now you push me into the arena of '*Avatāravāda*' or the theory of Divine-incarnation. What is the difference between Sugar and a sugar doll that emerges out of it? First tell me whether God can or cannot appear before the loving devotee in the Form desired by him? If your answer is 'Yes' then your question vanishes. If it is 'no' then you put a limitation on the unthinkable and amazing Will power of God; which is absurd.

Q:—Why is it necessary? Can He not do what He wills without taking a body? What kind of body is it?

A:—Perhaps you have gone through *'Gītā'*—

"अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन्।
प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय संभवाम्यात्ममायया॥
(Ch. 4.6)

The Lord says that eventhough He has no birth and death and the Lord of all that exist; He appears to be born subduing the nature by His own dazzling power.

"My birth and works are divine. Neither the Gods nor the *Ṛṣis* can know my birth or influence 4.9— because I am the root cause of Gods and *Ṛṣis*—Fools do not honour Me who appear in guise of a human body" (That body is not of Nature but the embodiment of knowledge and bliss) *Ibid.*, 9—11.

He can do what He wants without assuming a body but that will not serve the purpose because no one can understand why, how or by whom such things happen. So He says again—"Whenever there is violent suppression of *Dharma* and *Adharma* raises its head, then I embody Myself. To protect the good; to destroy the evil and to establish *Dharma* on a firm footing. I take shape from age to age (*Ibid.* ch. 4/7-8.) Protecting the Good is the primary duty. Among the wicked people there are two types. (1) Those who are violent and cruel. (2) Those who distract innocent people from the path of *Dharma* by their attractive but misguiding oration. The first must be destroyed. The second must be met with correct knowledge leading to final liberation. That is *Gītā*.

Q:—But when an *Avatāra* takes place it will be a limited one.

A:—Any fraction of infinity is infinity itself. There is no division. It is only an appearance produced from the bewildering infinite power of God. Look at this Upanishadic declaration—

'पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते। पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते।

That is perfect (original infinity); This is perfect (Incarnated figure) Infinity comes out of infinity. Even then infinity alone remains. You know this theory of Mathematics. Who is a *Kavi*? God Himself! "कविं पुराणं अनुशासितारं" (*Gītā*. 8—9). It is He who writes through the pen of such *Ṛṣis*. It is defectless. "I am not revealed to all due to the effect of My Yogic effulgence (*Gītā*. 7.25).

Q:—But if there is a defect in the pen itself? Its Capacity is limited.

A:—Limitation is there but no untruth will come out. It should be accepted unless it contradicts the authority of *Prasthāna Traya* (*Vedas*, *Brahma Sūtras* and *Gītā*) which are the supreme authority. In Vālmīki there is no such contradiction.

Q:—Where has Vālmīki said that Rāma is Śrī Hari Himself as you name God?

A:—You will find in the *Aṁśāvatarana Sarga* of *Bālakāṇḍa* (अंशावतरण सर्ग) Śrī Viṣṇu decided to take birth on the earth. The Gods also decided to take birth at various places to serve Him to upgrade their status of spiritual elivation.

Q:—It may be an interpolation at a later date.

A:—Don't imagine too much. Study the author before you come to that decision. The twenty four thousand *Ślokas* of *Rāmāyaṇa* are the expansion of the meaning of the 24 letters of *Gāyatrī* Hymn. The first *Śloka* of each thousand begins with a letter of *Gāyatrī* in sequence. Further at the end of the war when Sītā was to undergo the ordeal of fire, all Gods began to praise Rāma as the Supreme.

Q:—But at that time Rāma Himself said, 'आत्मानं मानुषं मन्ये रामं दशरथात्मजम्। (VI.) 118-11

A:—This is like a riddle to be understood clearly. The simple meaning is "O Gods!" (I) consider Myself as human, i.e., Rāma the son of Daśaratha who am I and whence did I come? You, divine beings tell it to me the hidden meaning is different. The word "आत्मानं" means 'Myself' as well as God. Instead of 'man' the word 'human' is used. The ensuing questions

are significant, "Who am I? Whence am I? Further Daśa means bird also. "Daśaratha" means; He whose vehicle is a bird i.e., Garuḍa." So it means He was Viṣṇu having Garuḍa as his chariot. "Your divine beings tell it to me." Why this request? God does not wish to reveal openly to all. That is '*Rāja Guhya*' or the Royal secret as the *Gītā* says. What did the gods tell? They extolled Him as the Supreme Being. "You are the Supreme Lord Nārāyaṇa the weilder of the weapon *Cakra*."

Q:—Now I am gagged; but can I seek a few clarifications in the history of Rāma?

A: Proceed. Be brief.

Q:—Daśaratha didn't tell Rāma to go to forest. Instead he asked Rāma to imprison him and assume power. Vasiṣṭha; Kausalyā, Lakṣmaṇa, Sumantra and the citizens opposed it. Later even Bharata did not agree to rule without Rāma. Disregarding all these well-wishers, why did Rāma obey Kaikeyī's selfish words? Is it *Dharma*?

A:—The answer for such questions will be on two plains: (1) worldly (2) Divine—

(1) On the Worldly Plain:—Rāma belonged to the Solar Dynasty. No king of that line broke any promise or told a lie. That was their esteem. Daśaratha had promised Kaikeyī two boons—she asked banishment of Rāma for fourteen years. So Rāma did not want to make Daśaratha break his promise for His sake.

(2) On the Divine Plain:— His main purpose was to kill Rāvaṇa and all such wicked demons.

Q:—But Rāvaṇa was a devotee of Śiva. He was a great Scholar of *Vedas* and other sacred lore. His only weakness was 'Woman'. He was a good administrator. His weakness is a common feature in most of the people. Why should he alone be blamed?

A:—The originality of Rāvaṇa was divine. He was the gatekeeper of *Vaikuṇṭha*; the abode of Viṣṇu that acts as a link

between the Universe and the unthinkable expanse beyond. Once when four great *Ṛṣis* Sanaka and others came to visit the Lord; the two gate keepers Jaya and Vijaya stopped them. Angry *Ṛṣis* cursed them to be born in the species of demons. So it happened. The Lord wanted to liberate them from the clutches of demon life.

Q:—But *Vaikuṇṭha* is a place of final liberation. How can any one have pride at that place to insult *Ṛṣis*?

A:—They were at the outer gate. Their liberation was not complete. The thin layer of *Prakṛti* (Nature) that covers the 'Soul' was not completely peeled off. So they were not the inmates of the Lord's Abode.

Q:—The killing of Vāli by Rāma is inglorious and cruel. Why should he hide behind a tree and interfere in a duel between brothers? There is absolutely no justification for this. On the other hand he could have tried to bring up a peace treaty between them.

A:—On the Worldly Plain:—Vāli had committed two grave offences (1) usurping the wife of his brother and property by force. (2) He repeatedly attempted to murder Sugrīva which he could not; because of the curse against his entry into the *Āśrama* premises of Mātaṅga where Sugrīva was hiding. Further he had discarded all the attempts of peace by his great well-wishers and elders like Āñjaneya and Jāmbāvan. He was stubborn. How could he need the advice of Rāma who was a stranger? His wife Tārā advised him against Rāma who had befriended Sugrīva, Vāli did not care a bit. On the divine Plain: (1) Vāli came to war with his brother wearing a wreath given by the Lord of Heaven Indra. It had the power of nullifying the enemy power who comes before him and so Vāli would win. Rāma wanted to honour the gift of Indra. (2) Vāli was the incarnation of Indra. In the divine status Sugrīva was junior to him being the incarnation of Sūrya the sun-God. Sugrīva's soul was ripe for Divine grace at that moment but Vāli's was not. Vāli would

get a better treatment of grace when he would be reborn as Arjuna of *Mahābhārata* where the Lord Rāma (Kṛṣṇa in the next birth) would grace him as charioteer in the battle and preach him the world famous *Gītā*. Sugrīva being Karṇa would be killed when he would be engaged in lifting his half sunken chariot. Tit for Tat would be complete. God knows the details of all the births of all beings past, present or future. But ṇo one else can have that knowledge.

Q:—Woman activists severely criticise Rāma for asking Sītā to fall into fire to prove her purity. Is it not cruelty against women?

A:—Rāma asked and Sītā fell! The fire God brought her up without even the tip of her hair being burnt, what do rationalists say about this?

Any Scientific explanation? If you deny the incident where is your question? Rāma knew His wife. He wanted to exhibit her super human chastity to the world; not to Himself.

On the divine plane:-It was not Sītā who was kidnapped by Rāvaṇa, but her shadow which was made to feel as real. After the fire test; original Sītā was brought up to surrender her to Rāma. This was a device of Gods.

Q:—Lastly Rāma banished his wife to deep jungle when she was pregnant, because an excited washerman talked some unbecoming words about her. How is it fair?

A:—Rāma did it as an ideal king, not as a loving husband. Ceaser's wife should be beyond suspicion. Sanctity of throne must be maintained at all costs. If the doubt about Sītā spreads in the Kingdom, the people begin to lose their morality. "यथा राजा तथा प्रजा" This is a great danger to the nation, of course the modern rulers with their one scandal after another and who stick to power, cannot understand this.

When Lakṣmaṇa took Sītā to the forest and left her there; within a few minutes Vālmīki appeared at the place and took her to his *Āśrama*. What is the secret of that? The washerman

who accused Rāma and Sītā had a reason of his previous life to do so. He was a bird whose pregnant wife was caught by Sītā for play when young. She did not release it even on request, so it cursed that Sītā also would be separated by her husband when pregnant (*Padma Puraṇa*). It was all divine will and plan about the worldly drama. So the divine view differs from others'. Nature should have its courses by the power of operation given by God. God only knows the secret of His will.

Q:—Well sir; I am sorry to have teased you much, please tell me the Divine Glory of Śrī *Rāma Nāma Japa.*

A:—That I cannot do. But I shall tell you the summary of song composed by Śrī Purandaradāsa. He was the greatest of Haridāsas as extolled by his own preceptor Vyāsa Rāja Tīrtha. Purandara Dāsa is said to have composed four lakhs and seventy five thousand songs on philosophy and divine glory in Kannaḍa. The Song:—What do the ignorant know about the divine glory and significance of the two letters Rā (रा) and Ma (म)?

By mere uttering the letter 'Rā' the Sins that are absorbed in blood and bones vanish. The Lord liberates the soul and gives emancipation. This is experienced by the great sage Vālmīki (who was a highway robber before). (1)

Again when the letter 'Ma' is uttered; it acts as a formidable fort-gate against the entry of sins, thrusting from outside. It purifies both mind and body. This is known by the greatest of the devotees Hanumān only. (2)

The Supreme *Vedas* are loudly declaring that there is no equal or superior thing to 'Rāma Nāma' in the world. The significance of the name of Purandara Viṭṭhala is well understood by Śiva also; who resides in Kāśī.

Hariḥ Om Tat Sat.



Philosophical Explanation of Rāmatattwa

—A. K. Prabhakar

The famous '*Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*' begins with a question by ascetic Vālmīki to the celestial sage Nārada: "Who can possibly be full of virtues in this world at present? Who is possessed of prowess and knows what is right? Who is conscious of services done, truthful of speech, and firm of resolve? Who is possessed of right conduct and who is friendly to all living beings? Who is a man of knowledge? Who has subdued his self? Who has conquered anger? Who is possessed of splendour and who is above fault-finding?" Sage Nārada replies that Rāma alone is the only answer to these.

These questions and answers are to remind us of the questions of Yudhiṣṭhira to Bhīṣma beginning with "किमेकं दैवतं लोके." Bhīṣma answers by citing the famous '*Viṣṇusahasranāma*' that the greatest *Dharma* is worshipping the Lord who is the Lord of the universe *(Jagat Prabhu)* and the Lord of lords *(Devadeva)*.

Rāma is described as the incarnation or embodiment of *Dharma* (रामो विग्रहवान् धर्मः). What is *Dharma*? It is a Sanskrit word and the meaning thereof is best understood in Sanskrit itself. The word is unique and its equivalent is not available in other languages to convey the correct meaning. *Dharma* is 'that which supports'. That which supports, maintains, nourishes, harmonises, brings together, unites both the inert and sentient, the individual and society, nation and the world, is *Dharma*. The very substratum of the entire creation is called *Dharma*. The common factor, the essence of countless imaginable

creations is *Dharma*. The other names synonymous in meaning in the *Vedas* are *Brahman, Ātman, Paramātman* etc. One of the names of Lord Viṣṇu in the *'Sahasranāma'* is *Dharma* (धर्मो धर्मविदुत्तमः). The exact meaning of *'Rāmo vigrahavān dharmaḥ'* is that Rāma is none other than the Supreme Lord Incarnate. He represents or personifies the Truth which by its very nature is one and is free from time, space and causation and is therefore birthless, deathless—and eternal.

Let us have, a brief look at Chapter—I of *'Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa'* (the spiritual version of Rāma saga) where the *Rāmatattva* is explained by the Lord Himself *(Śrī Rāmahṛdayam* Verses 44 to 56) and by Sītā Devī to Hanumānjī (Verses 32 to 43):—

"Know Rāma to be the Supreme *Brahman*—the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, the one without a second. He is pure Existence, devoid of all adjuncts, whom the senses cannot perceive as their object. Know Rāma as pure Bliss as devoid of all impurity, as peace, as changeless substance, as free from the stain of ignorance, as all-pervading spirit, as devoid of all disvalues and Self-revealing Consciousness. Know me (Sītā) to be the Primeval *Prakṛti,* the material and instrumental cause of the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe. In the mere presence of Rāma, the Supreme *Brahman,* I, His *Prakṛti* (power) create the universe unwearied.

Śrī Rāmahṛdayam (Verses 44 to 56) narrates the Rāma principle in his own words where the Supreme Truth is explained in terms of *Ātmā, Anātmā* and *Paramātmā.* Lord Mahādeva, who narrates *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* to Devī Pārvatī, states that *Rāma-hṛdayam* is a highly guarded secret, a panacea for all sins, holy and heart-delighting (Verse. 53) and continues that "any one—be an outcaste, a confirmed sinner, a thief, a murderer—who worships Śrī Rāma and studies *Śrī Rāmahṛdayam* with true devotion attains in this very life, a status which is difficult of achievement even for great *Yogīs"* (Verse. 56).

A study of *Rāmatattwa* is not complete without the study of *'Rāmanāma'* and its importance. 'Rāma' literally means, that which revels in everything—the pure light of consciousness, *Ātman,* the Self or in whom everything in the world revels. *Rāma Nāma* contains two syllables *'Rā'* and *'Ma'*. There are many interpretations for these two. One is that *'Rā'* represents *'Puruṣa'* and *'Ma'* stands for *'Prakṛti'*. That is, Rāma represents the entire universe which is not separate from the Absolute Reality (God, Lord, *Brahman, Bhagawān* etc.,) of which *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* are inseparable constituents like the two sides of a coin or fire and its power to burn etc.

Another view is that the term Rāma owes its origin to the holy *Mantras 'Om Namo Nārāyaṇāya'* and *'Om Namaḥ Śivāya'*. The sanctity of the two lies in the two syllables *'Rā'* of the former and *'Ma'* of the latter, in the absence of which 'Nārāyaṇāya' would become *'Na Ayanāya'* (No other path) and *'Namaḥ Śivāya'* becomes *'Na Śivāya'* (no auspiciousness).

A story highlighting the glory of *Rāmanāma* is popular. The monkey army was constructing the pathway across the sea for their march to Lanka and Rāma was once happily watching the scene. He saw monkeys lifting very huge rocks and mountains very easily for being dumped into the sea. Rāma out of curiosity, tried to lift one such rock but failed miserably. When he asked a monkey leader about the secret, he told Rāma that they would first write 'Rāma' on the stone and then carry it easily. The story underlines the principle that *'Nāma'* is greater even than the *'Nāmī'*.

Śrī Rāma was at once an *'Ādarśa Puruṣa'* and *'Maryādā Puruśa'*. He was *Ādarśa Puruśa* because he translated the ideal of perfection into a concrete path of reality in his exemplary life and never deviated even an iota from what he preached. So also he was a *'Maryādā Puruṣa'* because he not merely followed *Dharma Maryādā* mechanically but established *Dharma Maryādā* (Standard of righteous living) and lived as an embodiment

of righteousness. He cared only for the throne of Truth and Righteousness which amounted to the extension of his or our *Saccidānanda Swarūpa (Dharma)* into grosser realms of relative existence—the very basis of the Philosophy of Life.



ॐ आप्यायन्तु ममाङ्गानि वाक्प्राणश्चक्षुः श्रोत्रमथो बलमिन्द्रियाणि च सर्वाणि। सर्वं ब्रह्मौपनिषदं माऽहं ब्रह्म निराकुर्यां मा मा ब्रह्म निराकरोदनिराकरणमस्त्वनिराकरणं मेऽस्तु। तदात्मनि निरते य उपनिषत्सु धर्मास्ते मयि सन्तु ते मयि सन्तु।
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः॥

"May my limbs, speech, vital force, eyes, ears, as also strength and all the organs, become well developed. Everything is the *Brahman* revealed in the *Upaniṣads*. May I not deny *Brahman*; may not *Brahman* deny me. Let there be no spurning (of me *Brahman*), let there be no rejection (of *Brahman*) by me. May all the virtues that are (spoken of) in the *Upaniṣads* repose in me who am engaged in the pursuit of the Self; may they repose in me."

—*Chāndogyopaniṣad*

विक्षेपावरणे तत्र प्रथमं कल्पयेज्जगत्।
लिङ्गाद्यब्रह्मपर्यन्तं स्थूलसूक्ष्मविभेदतः॥
अपरं त्वखिलं ज्ञानरूपमावृत्य तिष्ठति।
मायया कल्पितं विश्वं परमात्मनि केवले॥

"Through the power of 'विक्षेप' it projects forth the entire universe (within itself). Right from 'महत्' to Brahmā the Creator to a blade of grass is all its creation. Through its 'आवरण' power it envelops the real knowledge. Actually there is nothing but *Brahma*. It is the effect of the 'आवरण' *Śakti* of *Māyā* that the world appears in *Brahma* itself as a phenomenon."

—(*A.R. Araṇ*. 4. 23-24)

Symbolism in Rāma Kathā

—R. P. Dwivedi

In all great literatures of the world symbols have always been used to represent reality in its varied manifestations. Symbolic representation is a fabric woven around the facts of life to attract attention and make the narration effective and ornate. Symbols co-relate the outer world of appearance with the inner world of meaning and thus exemplify the author's message to the people. The external events of the world and the inner experiences of our minds or the things that happen in time and space and the things that occur within us have very close co-relation and hence the value of symbolism in life and literature.

Says Juan Mascaro, a great Spanish litterateur, "The use of external images for spiritual purposes is quite common. The Song of Songs was incorporated in the Bible and a spiritual meaning given to it. St. John of the Cross uses the imagery of marriage to describe the supreme communion of love. In Sanskrit we find the following spiritual interpretation of Hindu ritual of bathing:—

आत्मा नदी संयमपुण्यतीर्था
सत्योदका शीलतटा दयोर्मिः।
तत्राभिषेकं कुरु पाण्डुपुत्र
न वारिणा शुद्ध्यति चान्तरात्मा॥

"The Spirit in thee is a river. Its sacred bathing places are संयम and virtue; its waters are truth; its banks are unimpeachable character; its waves are compassion. Go to that river for purification; thy soul cannot be made pure by mere water."

We can also remember how parables have always been used

for spiritual symbols. When Jesus spoke his parables he never meant them as 'True stories' but as stories of Truth, symbols leading to Truth. Another striking example of a glorious allegory in our Vedic literature, in which symbol (i.e., thought) and poetry (i.e., meaning) are harmoniously welded together, is found in the *Muṇḍakopaniṣad:*

प्रणवो धनुः शरो ह्यात्मा ब्रह्म तल्लक्ष्यमुच्यते।
अप्रमत्तेन वेद्धव्यं शरवत् तन्मयो भवेत्॥

(2—2.4)

"The *Praṇava* is the bow, the *Ātman* is the arrow and the *Brahman* is said to be its mark. It should be hit by one who is self-collected and that which hits becomes, like the arrow, one with the mark, i.e., *Brahman*".

But often in course of time people get so much involved in the web of outer expression that they lose sight of its underlying meaning. They forget that great truths of human life have been enshrined in interesting stories and parables for the good of human life. Allegorical representation has always been an effective vehicle of conveying eternal religio-spiritual messages of life to the masses.

Symbolic Significance of Three Important Personages in Rāma Kathā:

Many symbolic interpretations could be offered to explain the psychological, philosophical and spiritual significance of various characters and episodes of the *Rāma Kathā,* but I would confine myself only to three main characters which figure prominently in it.

Lord Rāma: As enunciated in our scriptures Lord Rāma is the embodiment of *'Dharma'* righteousness 'रामो विग्रहवान् धर्मः'. He is 'मर्यादापुरुषोत्तम' *Maryādāpuruṣottama*—the model of excellence in human virtues and the upholder of right conduct, which is worthy of emulation by mankind. He symbolises all those qualities of head and heart which go to make a man perfect and adorable. He has set an ideal of personal, social, political

and moral behaviour which has raised him to the status of an *Avatāra*—an incarnation of God. His birth symbolises the advent of a golden era ushered in by the redeemer of mankind—one, who in the words of Lord Kṛṣṇa, in the *Bhagavad Gītā*—'bodies Himself forth from age to age whenever righteousness is on the decline and unrighteousness is in the ascendant. He does so for the protection of the virtuous, for the extirpation of the evil-doers, and for the re-establishment of *Dharma* (righteousness) on a firm footing for the good of all.'

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्॥
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे॥

(*Bhagavad Gītā*: IV. 7-8)

The *Rāmāyaṇa* is an immortal religio-literary work which is simple and at the same time sublime. In an introduction to the *Rāmāyaṇa* Swāmī Cidbhavānanda says—"Śrī Rāma is the pivot on whom the whole fabric of this immortal book is woven. It is therefore called *Rāmāyaṇa* or the story of Rāma. He is the model to the young and the old, to the man of the world and to the recluse absorbed in the glory of the self. He embodies virtue and ardently applies it to life in conflicting circumstances. Though stationed in the mundane he is at the core supremely above it."

In spiritual terms Lord Rāma stands for *Paramātman* or the Cosmic Reality which pervades the entire universe or like space or *Ākāśa* provides the common background to all that exists. So Lord *Rāma* is the Soul of all souls, *Paramātman* of all *Jīvātmās* or the innermost core or basis of all living beings. As the incarnate of God on earth, Lord Rāma represents the One Ultimate Reality that reveals itself in three main manifestations—Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa—the procreative, the nourishing and the destructive faculties that produce, nurture and destroy the world so that a new universe could be born in its place.

Lord Rāma is the presiding deity of the universe; He is the indwelling spirit and driving force in all living beings. Shrouded in *Māyā* or thick illusion man can hardly realise that ultimate Reality or *Paramātman* seated in the innermost recess of his individual self—*(Jīvātman)*. Man's life on earth is, in fact, a constant struggle to realise his own self which eventually leads him to God-realization because individual soul is an inalienable part and parcel of the Cosmic Soul—Says *Mahātmā* Tulasī:

ईस्वर अंस जीव अबिनासी,
सत चेतन घन आनँदरासी।

(*Rāmacaritamānasa*)

Śrī Rāma is the personification of unflinching adherence to truth in all circumstances of life. His life is a grand saga of devotion to duty, dignity of human life and indomitable courage and bravery to fight all evils in the world. He constituted a just government and established an ideal rule known as *'Rāma Rājya'* which still remains the model of governance. His rule—*Rāma Rājya*—was a sweet combination of monarchy and democracy. As an embodiment of *Dharma* (righteousness) Lord Rāma ruled over all with a paternal care and paid personal attention to the welfare of all sections of his subjects. 'During his rule all people were devoted to God. Righteousness prevailed everywhere. Honest endeavour and noble toil marked mankind. Nobody was a drone in society. Peace and plenty reigned supreme. People were all happy and contented. People were all healthy. Famine, drought and pestilence were unheard of. Theft and murder never took place. Fear was not, nor anxiety. Rain and sunshine were balanced. Land and cows yielded in plenty. Earth beamed as heaven because Lakṣmī as Sītā sat by the side of Rāma.'

Goddess Sītā: Like Lord Rāma, Sītā, his divine consort, is the personification of all womanly virtues. She stands for perfection in womanhood and exemplifies purity, chastity, modesty, fidelity, forbearance and the spirit of sacrifice for the common weal. Just as Lord Rāma symbolises *Paramātman,* or

the Cosmic Soul which pervades all existence, Sītā stands for *Jīvātmā,* the individual soul or self, which is eternally wedded to *Paramātman,* the one Ultimate Reality. And just as *Jīvātmā* or the individual self is an integral part and parcel of *Paramātmā,* Sītā is essentially an inalienable part of Lord Rāma. Both Rāma and Sītā are co-existent, are inextricably interwoven together and are inseparable and immortal. Speaking of the divine couple—Lord Rāma and goddess Sītā—Mahātmā Tulasī Dāsa says—

गिरा अरथ जल बीचि सम, कहियत भिन्न न भिन्न।

(*Rāmacaritamānasa*)

'Like speech (word) and its meaning or like water and its ripples Lord Rāma and Sītā are inseparable and immortally wedded together.'

Sītā is the *Ādi Śakti* (आदि शक्ति), the primordial substance and force whence the whole universe has sprung up and to it does it eventually return after complete dissolution (प्रलय). Her forcible elopement by the demon-king Rāvaṇa signifies the apparent disappearance of virtue at times when the wicked forces or demonic vices, symbolised by Rāvaṇa, acquire extraordinary powers and abuse them. Her separation from Lord Rāma signifies the temporary estrangement of *Jīvātman* (the individual soul) from *Paramātman* (the Cosmic Soul) on account of worldly *Māyā* or illusion which is aptly characterised by Rāvaṇa, whose boundless material power has apparently eclipsed the predetermined communion of the husband (Rāma or *Paramātman*) with his wife (Sītā or *Jīvātmā*).

Her prolonged confinement and suffering at Lanka shows that even if wickedness seems to triumph over virtue, the latter prevails in the long run. Sītā's final release is an ample proof of final victory of truth over untruth, virtue over vice and light over darkness. But since the inviolable law of *Karma* works in our lives, the redemption of Sītā also involves great adventure and fierce fight waged by Lord Rāma against Rāvaṇa, that is, arduous struggle for the achievement of goal or the triumph of

virtue and fulfilment of one's mission in life.

Her emancipation from the long and inhuman captivity of Rāvaṇa, who is a living example of sensual lust and cruelty to woman, also indicates the final release of *Jīvātmā* from the bondage of worldly illusion or *Māyā,* which through gross ignorance, false identification of soul or self with body, ego and attachment, clouds the former and enslaves it till it realizes its own true nature and attains fulfilment. The crushing defeat and killing of Rāvaṇa (by Lord Rāma) is a clear indication that all worldly riches, powers and pleasures have but to come to an end as the famous English poet Thomas Gray asserts in his Elegy:

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour:
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

And finally Sītā's reunion with Rāma after a long period of perils and privations is amply symbolic of *Jīvātmā's* ultimate communion with *Paramātman* after undergoing the travails of transmigration or the highly intricate and intervening cycles of births and rebirths. Sītā's sincerest yearning for a reunion with her Lord (Rāma) stands for the longing of the finite (Jīvātmā or individual soul) with the infinite (*Paramātman* or Cosmic Soul). The intensity and poignancy of Sītā's striving for Rāma which is comparable to the Soul's ceaseless endeavour to immerse itself in God (All-Soul) could be summed up in the moving words of the Hebrew prophet who exclaimed:

"As the heart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God'.
My soul is athirst for God, for the living God,
When shall I come and appear before God?"

Sītā's separation from Rāma also illustrates that there is a division in us, a separation from something infinite with which we want to be reunited; because we are like a lost little child who is crying in the dark for his home.

In short, Sītā is the embodiment of purity and womanly virtues. She conquered misery by calmly enduring it. Sītā is the last word on womanly perfection.

Śrī Hanumānjī: To my mind, the third great personage in order of symbolic significance is Śrī Hanumānjī or Āñjaneya, whose role speaks volumes of his greatness. His complete dedication and selfless services to Lord Rāma, his numerous heroic exploits, his remarkable act of striking a golden mean of everlasting friendship between Rāma and monkey-king Sugrīva, his sublime mission of acting as Śrī Rāma's able envoy in tracing out Sītā from the hideous confinement at Lanka, his gallant fight against the demon-king Rāvaṇa and finally accomplishing the task of reuniting Rāma and Sītā are charged with deep symbolic meaning. But before explaining the thematic value of his matchless noble acts, let me first shed some light on what this epic character stands for.

First and foremost, Śrī Hanumānjī personifies true and eternal devotion to God, whose incarnation Lord Rāma undoubtedly was. He exemplifies the finest human virtues which are the essential constituents of an ideal devotee. His sublimest celibacy coupled with the highest moral character remains unparalleled in human history. His life is amply illustrative of the fact that the spiritual beauty of celibacy excels all other beauties. Moreover, Śrī Hanumānjī symbolises the fact that a celibate of sterling worth and character has no personal problems whatsoever. Therefore he alone is competent to solve the problems of those who are involved in worldly life. Śrī Rāma being a married man had his limitations and personal problems and without help from others he probably could not undo the limitations and solve his problems. In this context Śrī Hanumānjī stands for timely assistance to his master.

His adventurous journey to Lanka shows that celibacy and implicit devotion to Rāma could make him undertake any nigh—impossible task in life. His sincere search for Sītā shows

the unceasing efforts of the *Guru* or preceptor to realise his own self first and then enable others to realise the true nature of their individual self before actually marching onward for God-realisation. In other words, self-realisation precedes God-realisation. Self-realisation is not possible unless one is properly initiated by a spiritually competent *Guru* or preceptor aptly symbolised by Śrī Hanumānjī who enables Sītā *(Jīvātmā)* to get united with Rāma *(Paramātman)*. Just as an enlightened *Guru* or preceptor motivates his disciple or *Sādhaka* to strive for God-realisation, Śrī Hanumānjī personifies a true and spiritually awakened *Guru.*

So, symbolically speaking, Āñjaneya, in the words of Swāmī Paramārtha Caitanya, "stands for the principle of *Guru.* Rāma is *Paramātmā,* the *Puruṣa* and Sītā is *Jīvātmā,* the *Prakṛti* (because of the identification with *Prakṛti*). Rāma and Sītā get separated due to delusion and Sītā suffers because of that. This symbolises the *Jīvātmā's* isolation from *Paramātmā* due to *Māyā* (delusion) and the consequent suffering. Āñjaneya mediates and unites the two, symbolising the *Guru's* removal of the *Jīvātmā-Paramātmā* isolation."

Śrī Hanumānjī is an enlightened spiritual preceptor, a great *Guru* and *Ācārya* (आचार्य) who teaches the *Vidyā* or relationship of *Ātmā* (the individual soul) with *Paramātman* (the supreme soul). Sugrīva, the monkey-king, Vibhīṣaṇa, the younger brother of Rāvaṇa and many others who were taught the *Adhyātmavidyā* by Śrī Hanumānjī secured fulfilment in their lives.

He is said to be a *Cirañjīvī* (चिरञ्जीवी), the perennial self, the eternal reality, because he had achieved mystic union with the Supreme Lord in the form of Śrī Rāma. Since such a state of beatific mystic experience or the realisation of Truth is eternal, beyond time and space, there is only the glory and bliss of God. In him we find a synthesis of three paths of God-realization—the path of *Karma* (कर्म), the path of *Bhakti* (भक्ति) and the path of *Jñāna* (ज्ञान). A beautiful verse reveals his wisdom when he himself explains his relationship and identity with Śrī Rāma, God incarnate;

देहबुद्ध्या तु दासोऽस्मि जीवबुद्ध्या त्वदंशकः।
आत्मबुद्ध्या त्वमेवाहमिति मे निश्चिता मतिः॥

"From the stand point of physical body I am thy servant and you are my Master, from the point of view of the *Jīva* (subtle soul) I am thy part and you are the whole and from the stand point of the self I and You are One. This is my firm conviction".

In short, Śrī Hanumānjī symbolises the grandest spiritual transformation of human life—the *Bhakta* blossoming into *Bhagawān.*

To sum up, *Rāma Kathā* is a grand spiritual allegory. Symbolically, the *Rāmāyaṇa*—the glory of Rāma stands foremost among the classical literature of the world. Its appeal is universal. The perusal of this epic rejuvenates the mind and cherishes the faculty of understanding. It is the life companion of the ardent seekers.

Rāma Kathā, in its symbolic sense, is a spiritual adventure of each soul on its path to reach the cosmic soul. Śrī Rāma is the supreme soul. As the Supreme Self Śrī Rāma is most desirable and everything else becomes desirable because of this Supreme Self. *Brahman,* one without a second, is symbolised by Śrī Rāma. Sītā is the *Jīva* (जीव), who having got separated from the *Paramātman* due to a lurking desire for enchanting worldly objects symbolised by Mārīca, a golden deer, gets confined in Lanka, where king Rāvaṇa represents *Kāma* (lust). Śrī Hanumānjī embodies a happy synthesis of head, heart and hand or *Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga* and *Jñānayoga,* which enables a *Sādhaka* (seeker) to reach the zenith of *Sādhanā* (साधना). Only when the body, heart and mind are properly synthesised as in the case of Śrī Hanumān can one serve the *Jīva* (जीव) in distress like Sītā in Lanka. Śrī Hanumānjī is the embodiment of perfect devotion which enables one to serve the Supreme Lord and makes the devotee equally competent to help Sītā (Individual soul) in the *Aśoka Vana* (worldly entanglements) and gets her

finally united with her Lord Rāma i.e., the complete absorption of *Jīvātmā* with *Paramātmā.*

When the integrated intellect combined with disciplined moral force symbolised by Śrī Hanumānjī is directed towards the grief of Sītā (individual soul in worldly distress), it becomes capable of burning down the golden fortress of Lanka—the citadel of the enchantment of materialism by taking the flame of Sītā's grief (yearning for union with her Lord).

Rāvaṇa is the symbol of *Kāma* (sensuality or lust) which is the most powerful enemy within all of us. If we want to tread the moral and spiritual path of righteousness (धर्म) we must vanquish and destroy the inner enemy—passion and lust. And at the close of the epic Sītā is allowed to approach Rāma only through *Tapas* (तपस), that is, by entering into fire. This episode suggests the Vedantic dictum that Truth can be gained only by, *Tapas* (तपस).



चौ०—बिषय अलंपट सील गुनाकर । पर दुख दुख सुख सुख देखे पर॥
सम अभूतरिपु बिमद बिरागी । लोभामरष हरष भय त्यागी॥ १॥
कोमलचित दीनन्ह पर दाया । मन बच क्रम मम भगति अमाया॥
सबहि मानप्रद आपु अमानी । भरत प्रान सम मम ते प्रानी॥ २॥

"Saints as a rule have no hankering for the pleasures of sense and are the very mines of amiability and other virtues. They grieve to see others in distress and rejoice at the sight of other's joy. They are even-minded and look upon none as their enemy. Free from vanity and passion, they are conquerors of greed, anger, joy and fear. Tender of heart and compassionate to the distressed, they cherish guileless devotion to Me in thought, word and deed; and giving honour to all, they are modest themselves. Such souls, Bharata, are dear to Me as life."

—*Mānasa*

The Philosophy of Hope

(Śrīmad Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa)

—*R. Kannan*

In the material world, one is afflicted by happiness and sadness due to one's own deeds. In fact the amount of sadness is too much as compared to the happiness one enjoys here. Even the happiness enjoyed, is short-lived and transient.

However, one should not get upset and disheartened by the misery one is forced to undergo. Though the night is dark and threatening, the day will surely follow and brighten things. Every living being goes to sleep at night with a fond hope that the day will dawn shortly and brighten their wishes.

In *Sundara Kāṇḍa* of *Śrīmad Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* the principle of hope and faith is brought out through the words of Hanumān and Śrī Sītā Devī.

Hanumān, searched for Śrī Sītā Devī, all over Lanka particularly in and around the palace of Rāvaṇa, and was not able to locate her. He went inside the harem of Rāvaṇa and searched for her. There also, he could not see her. He was terribly upset that his crossing the great ocean had been of no use. There was no meaning in returning to Kiṣkindhā without any news about Śrī Sītā Devī and he decided even to sacrifice his life. However better wisdom prevailed over him and Hanumān dropped the idea.

जीवन् भद्राणि पश्यति।

There cannot be miseries and miseries alone throughout one's life. At one stage or other, one can expect good thing, to follow. In this fond hope, one should keep his body in tact and wait for better things to follow.

Śrī Sītā Devī was abducted by the evil minded Rāvaṇa and was put in *Aśoka Vana* amidst *Rākṣasīs*. For ten months she underwent lots of miseries, due to the separation of her beloved husband Śrī Rāma. Every now and then Rāvaṇa threatened to kill her, if she refused to accept him as her husband. She knew no ways to convey her sufferings to Śrī Rāma. She decided, to hang herself and die, rather to accept Rāvaṇa, being a chaste woman and devoted to Śrī Rāma.

At that stage, Hanumān the messenger of Śrī Rāma came to *Aśokavana* in search of Śrī Sītā Devī. Finding her, singly clad and suffering from pangs of separation from Śrī Rāma, he was deeply moved. In order to console her, he started to praise the *Ikṣvāku* race and that he had come to Lanka, at the behest of Śrī Rāma. He extolled the great qualities of Śrī Rāma so that Śrī Sītā could have faith and confidence in him.

Hearing the words of Hanumān, Śrī Sītā Devī was immensely pleased. She felt that all her miseries had disappeared suddenly she utters—

कल्याणी बत गाथेयं लौकिकी प्रतिभाति मां।
एति जीवन्तमानन्दो नरं वर्षशतादपि॥

(*Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* V. 34. 6)

"If one only lives, the happiness will reach him even after a hundred years."

Miseries may depress a person deeply but he should not be over taken by those. He should keep faith in God and hope for better things to follow. Miseries will disappear one day and the happiness will surely come to him.

There is nobody who would have suffered more than Śrī Sītā Devī. Our miseries are nothing when compared to her. Hence we should hope for the best, putting full faith in God and our hope will surely be rewarded by the Almighty.



Spiritual Aspects of Rāma Tattva

—*G. V. Narayana Rao*

One can reach the lotus feet of *Bhagavān* Rāma (*Rāma Dhāma*), through the medium of *Rāmāyaṇam* and its underlined *Rāma Tattva*.

The Vedic scripture of *Rāmāyaṇam* has two facets, one side, it contains the Vedic story of Śrī Rāma and Sītā. This is the external part of the story, very beautifully authored by the great sage Vālmīki. It becomes a valuable *Kāvyam* and *Veda*. The epic contains twenty-four thousand *Ślokas*. It contains seven *Kāṇḍas*. Vālmīki who is termed as a lion among *Munis* (lion among sages—*Muni Siṁha*) embeds the twenty-four sacred Mantric letters of goddess *Gāyatrī* in the various *Kāṇḍas*. Thus the *Maharṣi* makes *Rāmāyaṇam* most sacred and also a *Veda*. It surrounds the principle of *Satyaṁ Vada* and *Dharmaṁ Cara*. 'रामो विग्रहवान् धर्मः।' Rāma internally represents *Satyam*, and externally *Dharma*. The principles of *Dharma* may change from time to time. But *Satyam* never changes. It is eternal. Rāma is depicted as *Parama Puruṣa* in the epic. He is an ideal and virtuous person having all the sixteen attributes.

रामो द्विर्नाभिभाषते।

He does not speak in two ways. He always binds himself by the word given by him—

सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते।
अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद् व्रतं मम॥

If anybody surrenders, before Rāma and seeks His protection, He grants his hand of protection (*Śaraṇāgati Prapatti*). The word of protection is known as *Rāma Kavacam*. Śrī Rāma follows the

sacred principle of one word, one arrow and one wife.

Rāma Tattva radiates the Dharmic principles of *Bhagavadgītā*. It contains the quintessence of *Vedas* and various *Upaniṣads*. The Prācetasa (sage Vālmīki) explains spiritually and allegorically the relationship of *Ātmā* and *Paramātmā* and kinship of Nature (*Prakṛti*) and divinity. Externally *Rāmāyaṇam* is the story of Rāma and Sītā. Internally (spiritually) it is *Ātmā's* and *Paramātmā's* combination. It is a *Veda* and *Upaniṣad*—elsewhere, Rāma's *Upaniṣad* and Sītā's *Upaniṣad* reveal the *modus operandi* of *Ātmā* reaching *Paramātmā*, through the medium of virtuous *Ācārya* (preceptor). In the epic, Sītā represents *Ātmā*. Rāma is *Paramātmā*. To reach *Rāma-Dhāma*, Hanumān becomes the *Ācārya*—the road contains steep ups and downs. It is through the most difficult road of *Sādhanā*, the *Ācārya* takes the ardent devotee (*Sādhaka*) to the lotus feet of *Paramātmā* (*Rāma Dhāma*). The mighty ocean which Hanumān crosses and the difficulties he encounters on the way, represent *Saṁsāra Sāgara* and difficulties to cross this *Sāgara*.

The ocean of attachment, is nothing but *Māyā* (false vision—*Bhrānti*) of human attachment. Coming to the interesting part of the epic, Paraśurāma strangely and suddenly appears before Rāma. There comes a clash between *Viṣṇu Tattva* and *Śiva Tattva*. Paraśurāma realises that Rāma is none other than Lord Nārāyaṇa. He surrenders at the lotus feet of Rāma and grants boons to Rāma.

The entire *Rāma Tattva* contained in the sacred epic is wonderfully conveyed in an excellent poetic way, by the *Maharṣi* Vālmīki. In the *Mahākāvya*, every letter, word (in the epic) radiates *Rāma Tattva* and divinity most powerfully. The following hidden Vedic principles are conveyed in the *Mahākāvya*—

(1) The basic roots of the two Mantric letters *R* and *M* drive out evils and sins, if they are uttered and meditated upon *Rāma Japam* has mystic powers. (Some meditate as *Eka Akṣara*, *Ṣaḍākṣarī* (Six letters), *Ṣoḍaśākṣarī* (sixteen letters) etc. Basically the letters *R* and *M* lead to divinity.

(2) *Ātmā* has its place in every living being—*Ātmā* has to be taken to the lotus feet of *Paramātmā*, by a *Sādhaka* crossing the *Saṁsāra Sāgara* overcoming all the obstacles which come in the way.

(3) Rāma is *Sarvāntaryāmī* (all pervading) residing everywhere.

(4) The epic reveals the great victory of good (righteousness) over evil. Although a virtuous person has to undergo many ordeals, while following a righteous path, he finally comes out victorious with colours.

(5) A virtuous—*Guru* (preceptor) is needed for guiding the devotee in the right path.

(6) *Rāma Tattva* is infinitely far above caste, creed, religion etc. Rāma treats all his devotees alike. The fruitful results of a *Sādhaka* are dependant on the degree of one's devotion and dedication. Rāma grants benediction (*Anugraha*) even to a vulture Jaṭāyu, jungle lady, (*Śabarī*) *Asura* (*Rākṣasa*) and even a miniature creature like a squirrel.

(7) *Rāma Tattva* shows that Rāma has no enmity towards anybody, He has no prejudices.

(8) *Rāma Tattva* shows that Rāma is a very strict follower of *Rājanīti* (Rules and regulations of a ruler—king). Śrī Rāma's discourse to his brother prince Bharata, contains all principles of *Rāma Rājya* leading to *Loka-Kalyāṇa*.

(9) *Rāma Tattva* shows that king's primary responsibility is the welfare of his people and subjects. Family concern takes only a secondary place, dependent on merits.

(10) Śri Rāma shows to the devotees through *Rāma Tattva*, the duties of a disciple towards his mentor, a dutiful son towards his parents, brothers, towards a dedicated wife, friend, surrenderer etc.

Lord Śiva tells Pārvatī that the very utterance of the name of Śrī Rāma drives away all sins and takes the devotee to paradise (heaven) and to the ultimate goal of *Mokṣa*.

Hanumān describes *Rāma Tattva* as follows, face to face to Rāma.

देहबुद्ध्यास्मि दासोऽहं जीवबुद्ध्या त्वदंशकः।
आत्मबुद्ध्या त्वमेवाहमिति मे निश्चिता मतिः॥

Hanumān is described as a *Ratnam* (jewel) in the sacred necklace of *Rāmāyaṇa* (*Rāma* + *Ayanam*).

Rāma Tattva is best expressed by monkey God, Hanumānjī. In the episode known as *Hanumat Satyāgraham*, Hanumān confronts with Rāma himself, under compelling circumstances. He proves that *Rāma Tattva* is infinitely far more powerful than the person of Rāma, himself in his physical form. He opens his chest and shows that Rāma is eternal and resides always in his heart. He says that *Rāma Nāma* itself, is his very heart and soul.

Lord Hanumān always merrily and joyously dirnks nectar of *Rāma Nāma*, keeps laughing, exhibiting his teeth and offering prayers to the lotus feet of Rāma. *Parama Yogī* does *Rāma Japam* round the clock.

यत्र यत्र रघुनाथकीर्तनं तत्र तत्र कृतमस्तकाञ्जलिम्।

Lord Hanumān goes with bended head and prostrates wherever Rāma's songs are sung.

In other words, Hanumānjī is the embodiment of *Rāma Tattva*. Hanumān and *Rāma Tattva* are inseparable. That is the reason why Hanumānjī is invoked, before offering prayers to Rāma and performing *Rāma Japa* (meditation of Rāma).



यत्पादपङ्कजरजः श्रुतिभिर्विमृग्यं
यन्नाभिपङ्कजभवः कमलासनश्च।
यन्नामसाररसिको भगवान्पुरारि-
स्तं रामचन्द्रमनिशं हृदि भावयामि॥

"The dust of whose lotus feet is sought for by the *Vedas;* from whose navel-lotus Brahmā the Creator, sprang up; the nectar of whose name Lord Śiva always tastefully drinks, I meditate upon that Rāmacandra in my heart night and day."

—(*A.R. Bāl.* 5.47)

Śrī Rāma in Mādhva Literature

—R. Sridharan

Śrī Madhva (1238-1317 AD) has stated thus—

वेदे रामायणे चैव पुराणे भारते तथा।
आदावन्ते च मध्ये च विष्णुः सर्वत्र गीयते॥

"In the *Vedas*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, *Purāṇas* and everywhere Śrī Viṣṇu's supremacy is proclaimed in the beginning in the end and in the middle."

As the greatest reconciler of the sacred texts (समन्वयाचार्य) Śrī Madhva showed how all the *Vedas*, *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas* glorify Śrī Viṣṇu. For this special purpose only he wrote his great work *Mahābhārata Tātparya Nirṇaya*. When he mentioned *Rāmāyaṇa* he only referred to the *Mūla Rāmāyaṇa* (मूल रामायण) or the original *Rāmāyaṇa* and not *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*.

चरितं रघुनाथस्य शतकोटि प्रविस्तरम्।
एकैकमक्षरं पुंसां महापातकनाशनम्॥

Mūla Rāmāyaṇa consisted of one hundred crore *Ślokas* and it was available only in *Brahma Loka* and Brahmā and *Mukhya Vāyu* were the only divinities fit to read and assimilate the contents of *Mūla Rāmāyaṇa* which was composed by the Lord Himself.

Subsequently due to the grace of Brahmā and Nārada saint Vālmīki composed the 24000 *Ślokas* called *Rāmāyaṇa*, which is popularly available now. But Śrī Madhva relied on *Mūla Rāmāyaṇa* only and this work is not available now.

To know real Rāma story Śrī Madhva has devoted six chapters (from the 4th chapter to 9th chapter) in his work—"*Śrīman Mahābhārata Tātparya Nirṇaya*" for presenting the correct Rāma story. He had solved many knotty problems found in

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa and other *Rāmāyaṇas* using *Mūla Rāmāyaṇa* as base. Many apparent contradictions had been resolved by him. To deal with them will take itself a long article and so I defer it except to make two references to show how he reconciled the knotty problems.

Everybody knows that Lord Śrī Rāma deserted Sītā Devī after coronation due to a hearsay by a group of *Dhobīs*. According to *Śāstras*, Sītā is *Nitya Aviyoginī* (inseparable from the Lord) and blemishless and how then Rāma deserted her. *Ācārya* Madhva states that there was a group of *Daityas* known as *Surāṇākas* (सुराणाक) who had obtained a boon from the Lord Brahmā that they would not die till Lord Śrī Hari and His consort is separated, knowing well that they are inseparable always. To send those wicked demons who were born as Dhobīs Lord Rāma acted as if he is deserting Sītā in the thick forest. But in reality Sītā was with the Lord always, but for outward appearance it looked as if they were separated. This aspect is not told in any other *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Likewise after His marriage Śrī Rāma encountered with Paraśurāma even though both are Viṣṇu *Rūpas*. Here also *Ācārya* says that there was a demon by name *Atula* (अतुल) who had taken shelter under Paraśurāma due to a boon of Brahmā and so Rāma killed that wicked fellow by breaking the bow of Paraśurāma. Like this many knotty riddles were solved by Madhva in his *Mahābhārata Tātparya Nirṇaya Tr—Rāma Kathā Nirūpaṇa Bhāga* (portion).

After Śrī Madhva the great contributor to Rāma story was Śrī Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍita Ācārya, son of Madhva's disciple Śrī Trivikrama Paṇḍita Ācārya. In *Śrīmadhva Vijaya* itself a biographical work composed by him on Madhva he had touched certain aspects of *Sundara Kāṇḍa* in the Ist chapter, and the Rāma story in the 8th chapter. In his *Maṇi Mañjarī*, he devoted the first two chapters to story of Rāma only. Even in this brief story he has brought certain basic aspects like sending Surāṇīka

Daityas to *Tamas* etc., which confirm his story allegiance to the Madhva views.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍita composed a big work called *Saṅgraha Rāmāyaṇa*. In this work he has condensed the entire *Rāmāyaṇa* taking the clues from *Mahābhārata Tātparya Nirṇaya* and *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. Śrī Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍita paid obeisance to Vālmīki also in the *Saṅgraha Rāmāyaṇa*. It is said in tradition that Śrī Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍita offered this work as (foot offering) when Madhva visited his house for a *Bhikṣā* and Madhva himself blessed this work *Saṅgraha Rāmāyaṇa* as the greatest contribution by a Mādhva scholar as the *Rāmāyaṇa* literature.

Śrī Rāja Rājeśwara Tīrtha 6th pontiff of Udupī Palimar Mutt has composed a small epic by name *Rāma Sandeśa* on the lines of *Megha Sandeśa*. It delineates Rāma story well.

Śrī Vādirāja Tīrtha (1480 AD—1600 AD) had composed the *Daśāvatāra Stotra* in Aśvadhāti meter in 34 *Ślokas*. There he describes the Rāma story in 11 *Ślokas* (from 12th *Śloka* to 22nd *Śloka*).

Śrī Vādirāja also composed a small *Śtotra* by name *Śrī Rāma Pañcakam* (श्री राम पंचकम्) in 7 *Ślokas* where Rāma *Mahimā* is extolled.

Śrī Rāghavendra Tīrtha Swāmījī (1623—1671 AD) has composed the famous work *Śrī Rāma Cāritra Mañjarī* (श्री राम चारित्र मंजरी) in *Sragdharā* metere (स्रग्धरा वृत्त). This work contains only 11 *Ślokas*. In these 11 *Ślokas* he had epitomised without omitting any major/minor details and at the same time adhering to the doctrines contained in *Mahābhārata Tātparya Nirṇaya*. It is an excellent work. A separate article has to be written to bring forth the glories of this great work of Śrī Rāghavendra.

Śrī Sumatīndra Tīrtha of Śrī Raghavendra Mutt wrote *Rāma Daṇḍakam* and *Rāma Tārāvalī* (राम तारावली).

Śrī Vādīndra Tīrtha of Rayar Mutt in his work *Rāghavendra Maṭhagata Arcāgati Krama* (राघवेन्द्र मठगत अर्चागति क्रम) describes the various aspects of *Mūla Rāma* Idol and *Mūla Rāma Mahimā*.

Śrī Satya Dharma Tīrtha of Vittardhi Mutt had written

Rāma Amṛtam and *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa Vyākhyāna*. Śrī Galagali Mudgalācārya wrote *Rāmāṣṭaka*. Some anonymous writer wrote *Rāma Gītā*.

One disciple of Śrī Santuṣṭa Tīrtha wrote a book by name *Rāma Śabdārtha Ratna Mālā* (राम शब्दार्थ रत्नमाला). One Śrīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa of Udupī had composed 'दाशरथि शतकम्'.

Like this many Mādhva Paṇḍitas have written a lot of books on Rāma story from time immemorial till this date. Most of these works are in *Saṁskṛta* language.

Apart from these *Saṁskṛta* poets a number of Haridāsas had composed soul stirring songs in Kannada language praising Rāma and delineating story of Rāma according to Mādhva tradition. Composers like Śrī Pada Rāja, Śrī Vyāsa Rāja, Śrī Vādirāja, Śrī Purandara Dāsa, Śrī Kanaka Dāsa, Śrī Vijaya Dāsa, Śrī Gopāla Dāsa, Śrī Jagannātha Dāsa, and Śrī Praṇeśa Dāsa had composed hundreds of songs, *Suladhis* and *Ugabhogas* on Rāma.

Śrī Purandara Dāsa in one of his songs on Śrī Rāma had stated that Śrī Rāma was born on *Caitra Śukla Navamī*, *Budha Vāra*. No where in classical literature, we find this information namely that Śrī Rāma was born on Wednesday. Only Śrī Purandara Dāsa had mentioned this. So we get a lot of information from these great Haridāsas. On the whole Mādhvas contribution to Rāma literature is vast and variegated. Only illustrative references are given here and nothing was dealt exhaustively due to paucity of space and time.



दो०—निंदा अस्तुति उभय सम ममता मम पद कंज।
ते सज्जन मम प्रानप्रिय गुन मंदिर सुख पुंज॥ ३८॥

"They who regard both obloquy and praise alike and who claim My lotus feet as their only possession—such saintly souls are dear to Me as life and are veritable abodes of noble qualities and embodiments of bliss."

—*Mānasa*

Rāmāyaṇa—the Way Leading to Salvation

—*Prof. Gurupad K. Hegde*

The *Rāmāyaṇa* is the *Ādikāvya* only in the sense that a new poetic era began with this work. This is the first long narrative poem divided in chapters and cantos. It is the first *Kāvya* known as *Mitra Sammita* type. Later *Mitrasammita* is one that acts as a link between the Vedic literature and the post epic literature in respect of themes as well as poetic factors.

Beginning with the *Rāmāyaṇa* all the epics give us a number of stories of gods and goddesses and the super-human personalities. They all describe the almighty nature of the concerned divine being and therefore, they are viewed at religiously. They are the works respected highly for the morals they teach, for the poetic beauties they present, and for the stories they tell. It is said that they remain with due regards so long as the universe exists. For example, it is said in the *Rāmāyaṇa*—

यावत्स्थास्यन्ति गिरयः सरितश्च महीतले।
तावद्रामायणकथा लोकेषु प्रचरिष्यति॥

This statement proclaiming that the *Rāmāyaṇa* exists so long as there exist mountains and rivers in the world, is true to one and all in the metaphysical sense. 'R' means 'fire' that is the main part of the soul in the body; 'Ā' means its nature of permanence; and 'M' with 'A' means the chain of rebirth. 'S' means *Śakti* the power of the soul; 'Ī' denotes its manifesting nature with certain effect; 'T' means nectar and with 'Ā' it means the imperishable nature of the power of the soul. And this is how Sītā is the wife of Rāma. Thus the *Rāmāyaṇa* is connected with every soul in the world and therefore, it is not at all

confined to a Hindu only nor to man alone. It is in this sense that the sage Vālmīki makes the above statement. This type of sense is conveyed by the denotative power of the letters and the words employed; and thereby the '*Mitrasammita*' works including the *Rāmāyaṇa* stand for *Prabandhśleṣa* or perceptional pun, a new concept proposed by this very author. A devotee as well as a common man finds here a great splendour of gods and the goddesses, the merited life of high souled individuals and he finds the wicked punished: A *Sahṛdaya* or a connoisseur absorbs here in the poetic sense and sound; but a man who goes deep into the words and letters as well finds the metaphysical world opened to him.

Prabandhaśleṣa starts with the name of the poet of the *Rāmāyaṇa* itself. Vālmīki is the poet of this epic as well as a character therein. The word Vālmīki means that wherein beings move about "वलते चलते प्राणी यत्र" which means body. The superimposing element on the individual soul that soul is the body itself means Vālmīki. And therefore, in the metaphysical sense Vālmīki means *Vijñānamaya Koṣa* which in the *Vigatārtha*, separates an individual soul from the Supreme Knowledge. For an internal meditator this *Koṣa* reveals the *Viśeṣajñāna*. The Supreme Knowledge is the *Parabrahma*.

Ratha is derived from *Ramu* to play. Daśaratha means the vehicle constituted of ten parts belonging to the ten organs, viz., voice, hands, legs, anus, organ of procreation, skin, eyes, ears, tongue and nose in their early stage of the blastocyst form of an egg and mythologically that is the seer Kaśyapa. *Śakti* or *Śuddhasattva* is of three kinds, viz., *Jñāna, Kriyā* and *Icchā* which are in a very subtle form and in which *Cetana* or the life force of the *Parabrahma* reflects and functions throughout one's life-span. The *Cetana* reflected in *Jñānaśakti* is *Buddhi*—the intellect, reflected in *Kriyā-Śakti* is *Manas*—the mind and *Citta* the mental aspect of aiming at and reflected in *Icchāśakti* is *Ahaṅkāra*—the consciousness of an individuality: the three

energies are the three wives of Daśaratha called Kausalyā, Sumitrā and Kaikeyī and the four aspects of *Cetana* are his four sons called Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Śatrughna and Bharata respectively. The hormones secreted from the pituitary gland of the mother which are the basic need of all these activities in the womb are called *Pāyasa* in total. As regards the creation of the Universe *Pāyasa* means all pervasive energy. The word Rāma means the continuity of the individual aspect of the soul. So Rāma stands for the element of knowledge "बुध्यते इति"; Lakṣmaṇa means the psychological element pointed out through the act of thinking "लक्ष्यते मननक्रियया". Knowledge requires correct thinking; that is why Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are always together throughout the *Rāmāyaṇa.*

Avidyā in the Upanishadic sense means worldly knowledge as against *Vidyā* the Supreme Knowledge. The *Cetana* is the part and parcel of knowledge. *Sattvaguṇa* is its innate nature. Through *Avidyā* it is ceaselessly attacked by *Rajoguṇa* alongwith *Tamoguṇa.* The *Rajastattva* is configurated as Rāvaṇa. The word Rāvaṇa means one who roars "रौति इति" or one who robs the *Śakti* of the *Cetana* "रुवन्ति नीयते अनेन इति". Kumbhakarṇa means the *Tamoguṇacaitanya.* Terrific persons also are seen some times merciful: that is how Vibhīṣaṇa "विगतं भीषणत्वं यस्मात् सः" who stands for the phenomenon of *Malinasattva* is the brother of the two and joins Rāma later on. *Laṁ* means earth and that is the element of the *Mulādhāra* plex; 'K' with 'Ā' denotes its stay in water in the middle of the generative organ and anus. Thus, Lanka means the *Mūlādhāra Cakra* where the mystical vein, *Suṣumnā* with the *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti,* here Sītā, is supressed by the *Rajoguṇatva.* Thus the poet means here neither Srilanka or Cylon nor a man from southern part of India. A *Yogin* finds his *Kuṇḍalinī* roused through *Prāṇāyāma* and *Haṭhayoga* by conquering the elements of *Rajas* and *Tamas* that is the release of Sītā. Indriyas (i.e., gods) are there in each and every being on the earth; but, self-realization for an individual soul is

possible only in the human birth because of man's physical structure and reasoning capacity. That is why Viṣṇu takes birth as a man to kill Rāvaṇa.

Viśvāmitra means the *Tejastattva* which leads the *Cetana* further to the brain, to the pituitary gland or to the mystical *Ājñā* plex and the veins *Iḍā* and *Piṅgalā.* Metaphysically *Iḍā* vein is the *Īśvaraśakti* or the sun and that is the river Gaṅgā while *Piṅglā* vein is the *Parāśakti* or the moona and that is the river Sarayū. *Piṅgalā* is called Yamunā river also when it is fully developed up to the *Mūlādhāra* plex. *Īśvaraśakti* is beyond the reach of illusion or *Avidyā;* hence, that is the place *(Ājñācakra)* where cupid is burnt to ashes. Rāma kills Tāṭakā. *Tāṭa* means rest that is a character of the *Tamastattva.* Therefore *Tāṭakā* means the phenomenon of motionless state "ताटं करोति इति". All the demoniac persons whom Rāma kills or drives away when Viśvāmitra performs sacrifice means the *Tamastattva* in the limbs covering the just-formed limbs in the womb. The *Yajña* of Viśvāmitra means the creation of the entire universe on the one hand and the formation of the entire physical structure of a man or woman in the womb on the other. Now, Rāma liberates Ahalyā from the curse. It means the removal of the inactive nature of the beautiful universe of many planets departed from the sun's swift rotations and which is gradually developed with minerals, things and beings on the one hand and the removal of the inactive nature of the well developed body in the womb on the other.

In the metaphysical sense *Śuddhasattva Guṇa* or *Mūlaprakṛti* lies in the *Suṣumnā* vein that is beyond the reach of the *Rajastattva* and the *Tamastattva.* The *Cetana's* handling of the *Suṣumnā* vein before its unity with the *Śuddhasattva Guṇa* (i.e., Sītā) manifested from the *Hiraṇyagarbha* Brahmā is the bow-episode. The name of the bow is Sunābha "सुष्ठु स्थीयते नाभौ इति सुनाभ:". *Nābhi* means centre also. The vein staying in the central place in between *Iḍā* and *Piṅgalā* is *Suṣumnā.* The individual

soul pervades the entire embryo fully developed in the seventh month—"सप्तमे मासे जीवसंयुक्तो भवति" says the *Garbhopaniṣad*. That is how the *Rāmāvatāra* is the seventh one among the ten *Avatāra's* of Lord Viṣṇu. The soul gets its individual existence and the *Layatattva* in the form of Paraśurāma is defeated. The word Paraśurāma denotes one who shatters all "परान् शृणाति इति परशु; तस्मिन् रमते इति परशुराम". Then *Icchāśakti* becomes influenced by *Avidyā*.The human wants are unlimited. Mantharā means the psychological element of agitation. The individual aspect of *Ahaṁ* overpowers the knowledge of the self. Rāma goes to the forest followed by Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa and stays in the Citrakuta, the element of *Vigatajñāna*. Later he goes to the *Daṇḍakāraṇya* (i.e., man enters into the course of the practical life after his birth) where the *Śuddhasattva Guṇa* is surprised by the *Rajastattva* starting with the Śūrpaṇakhā-episode. *Śūrpa* means winnowing basket. Śūrpaṇakhā is one whose nails are like the *Śūrpas*; and that is *Jaṭhara* the stomach. Thus, hitherto, the *Rāmāyaṇa* means how an individual soul, departed from the Supreme Soul takes birth as a man and how it comes under the influence of the ordinary course of life.

Hereafter starts the course of man becoming the Supreme God. Rāma meets Jaṭāyu who stands for a *Guru* the force that releases one from the enmassing nature of *Avidyā* "जटति इति जटा and एति इति आयु:". Jaṭāyu dies soon after he narrates the matter how Sītā is taken away forcibly by Rāvaṇa and the way that he has to follow. *Guru's* work is to direct the right method and the meditator is to proceed further. Then Rāma kills Kabandha in the sense that the meditator controls the greed of sensual pleasures, which comes in the way of the bliss. "कं बद्ध्यते अनेन इति कबन्ध:". Rāma meets Śabarī, one who stores only luscious things—"शं बिभर्ति इति". In the body Śabarī means the gall bladder. A meditator needs, first of all, good physical set up before practicing the *Haṭhayoga* mentioned further. In the metaphysical sense Śabarī means correct thinking. These are many interpretations

of the *Vedas* or the means of knowledge; the meditator should choose the right ones.

A common man may wonder as to how Rāma conquers Rāvaṇa with the help of monkeys and bears. The word *Kapi* ordinarily means a monkey but, if it is resolved as "कं पाति इति" it means that which protects happiness and, that is air. Nobody can exist without air. The happiness of a man ends with his last breathing. The air inhaled and exhaled while breathing acts like the jumping activity of a monkey and therefore, it is configurated in a monkey's form. The vital air in the breath is reckoned mainly in five kinds and they are named after their position in the body as well as their functions. They are called *Prāṇa, Apāna, Samāna, Udāna* and *Vyāna.*

Sugrīva, born of the sun's spirit *Aṁśa* is the *Prāṇa* aspect of the breath. The main place that the *Prāṇa* resides is heart "हृदि प्राण: स्थितो नित्यम्". It is known that in the physical sense the inhaled air with oxygenic element purifies blood which is pumped by the heart to all the limbs of the body. That is why the *Prāṇa* is called Sugrīva "शोभनं गीर्यते रसादिकं अनेन इति". In sustaining life the role of the *Prāṇa* is as important as the role of the sun in the case of the universe; therefore Sugrīva is said an incarnation of the sun. The other places of the *Prāṇa* in the body are the space in between the nose and mouth, navel and the foot thumb according to the *Tṛśikhibrāhmaṇopaniṣad* (78-79). Vālin means the *Apāna* aspect of the breath. Its main function in the body is to clear out the urine and filth; therefore, its place is pointed out as "अपानो गुदमण्डले". Both the words Vālin and *Apāna* resolved as "वलते अधोमुखं इति वालं; वालं अस्य इति वालिन्" and "अधो नयति इति अपान:" means the same idea. Both the *Prāṇa* and the *Apāna* are very important aspects of breath "प्राणादि पञ्चकं तेषु प्रधानं तत्र च द्वयम्". Vālin is the elder brother because the *Apāna* is stronger than *Prāṇa.* Sugrīva is threatened and his wife is enjoyed by Vālin; it means gastric trouble and so on in the body. Jāmbavat is a bear and stands for the *Udāna* aspect of

breath. Its place is the neck "उदानः कण्ठमध्यगः". The word Jāmbavat is derived from *Jam* to eat. This aspect of breath helps in swallowing the food. Its function, at the time of death, is to exhale the breath once for all "ऊर्ध्वं नीयते अनेन इति उदानः" That is why Jāmbavat is old one, Nala means the *Vyānavāyu* that pervades the entire body "व्यानः सर्व शरीरगः" and "विस्तृतं नयति इति". The word *Nala* is derived from *Nala* to bind. The *Svādhiṣṭhāna* is the mystical plex belonging to *Jalatattva.* Next to this plex comes the *Mūlādhāra,* the *Bhūtattva* or Lanka where the *Kuṇḍalinī* is supressed. A meditator approaches the *Mūlādhāra* with the help of the *Vyānavāyu* in passing through the *Jalatattva* that is why *Nala* builds up the bridge on the sea. Nīla means the *Samānavāyu.* Its main centre is the navel part of the body "समानो नाभिदेशे तु". Its function is to digest the food "नीलति इति" and to distribute the essence. So Nīla is offered the post of the commander-in-chief of the *Kapisenā.*

The meditator concentrates on all these five aspects of breath and treats them, through various methods of *Prāṇāyāma* as required to rouse the *Kuṇḍalinī* by conquering the power of *Avidyā,* the *Rajastattva* and the *Tamastattva.* For all these activities he must breathe through nose only that too systematically. This systematic breathing is called Hanumat. Therefore, Rāma meets him first before seeing Sugrīva and others or before recognising the *Prāṇa* and *Apāna* etc.

Now, it is clear why Rāma helps Sugrīva and kills Vālin. A meditator requires *Prāṇavāyu* very strong to rouse the *Kuṇḍalinī* and the strength of *Apānavāyu* is to be utilised for. The *Apānavāyu* cannot be turned easily. The meditator controls it by force "अधोगतिमपानं वै ऊर्ध्वगं कुरुते बलात्" says *Yogacūḍāmaṇyupaniṣat* through *Prāṇāyāma* and directs it to assist the *Prāṇavāyu.* The *Apāna* in its turned position is called Aṅgada. This aspect is storied that Rāma kills Vālin and makes his son Aṅgada the heir apparent in association with Sugrīva.

Prabandhaśleṣa the perceptional pun continues. Rāma who

stands for a meditating soul destroys all the demoniac elements that represent the various aspects of *Avidyā* and comes to Ayodhya which means the *Sahasrāra* plex "अविद्यया न योद्धु शक्यते यत्र इति अयोध्या" alongwith Sītā—the *Kuṇḍalinīśakti.* Then he stands in the *Paramahaṁsa* position that is figured as adorning the throne.



अथ यदेवैतदादित्यस्य शुक्लं भाः सैव साथ यन्नीलं परः कृष्णं तदम तत्सामाथ य एषोऽन्तरादित्ये हिरणमयः पुरुषो दृश्यते हिरण्यश्मश्रुर्हिरण्यकेश आप्रणखात्सर्व एव सुवर्णः ॥

तस्य यथा कप्यासं पुण्डरीकमेवमक्षिणी तस्योदिति नाम स एष सर्वेभ्यः पाप्मभ्य उदित उदेति ह वै सर्वेभ्यः पाप्मभ्यो य एवं वेद ॥

"Then, this white colour that the sun verily has, that indeed is *Sā.* Then, the blue colour that is deep black is *ama*. That makes up *Sāma.* Then, this one, the golden Person who is seen in the sun, who has a golden beard and golden hair, whose every part from the nail upward is golden, of that Person the two eyes are like the lotus whose colour is like the seat of a monkey. His name is *ut*. He who is such is above all sins. He who knows thus, certainly rises above all sins."

—*Chāndogyopaniṣad* (I. 6. 6-7)

स पर्यगाच्छुक्रमकायमव्रण-
मस्नाविरँ शुद्धमपापविद्धम् ।
कविर्मनीषी परिभूः स्वयम्भू-
र्याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान् व्यदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः ॥

"He is all-pervasive, pure, bodiless, without wound, without sinews, taintless, untouched by sin, omniscient, ruler of mind, transcendent, and self-existent; he has duly alloted the (respective) duties to the eternal years (i.e., to the eternal creators called by that name)."

—*Īśopaniṣad* (8)

Rāmāvatāra

(As depicted by Śrī Madhvācarya)

—*Dr. A. R. Panduranga Rao*

Śrī Madhvācarya wrote *Mahābhārata Tātparya Nirṇaya* in verse form in 32 chapters. He devoted six chapters (IV to IX) in this work to the narration of the story relating to Rāma and to elucidate the conflicts and inconsistencies found in the story of Rāma as described in the epics, *Vedas, Purāṇas, Pāñcarātras* and *Mahā Rāmāyaṇa*—which is distinct from Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*. This narration is noteworthy in that it exemplifies the projection of Rāma as an *Avatāra* of Lord Hari and His *Satyasaṁkalpatva*.

Madhva describes Rāma in the following verse—

जयत्यजोऽक्षीणसुखात्मबिंबः स्वैश्वर्य कांतिप्रततः सदोदितः।
स्वभक्तसंतापदुरिष्टहंता रामावतारो हरिरीशचन्द्रमाः॥

(*Chapter* III *Verse* 2)

Hari, though unborn, incarnated as Rāma, stands foremost. The moon viz., Rāma, is the supreme sovereign Hari. He is the very embodiment of bliss and possesses pervasion and overlordship, pervades the entire cosmos with His own sovereignty and effulgence. He is eternally rising. He removes the misery arising out of mental affliction of His devotees.

To Madhva, Rāma is a manifestation of the Supreme Lord Hari, just as any other manifestation such as Kṛṣṇa, Vedavyāsa, Nṛsiṁha etc. These different manifestations are absolutely on a par with one another. They are of equal merit, status, rank, attribute and powers. It is the same infinite in every manifestation. The *Avatāras* are concerned with specific functions like *Balakriyā*, *Jñānakriyā* etc.

In order to understand Madhva's conception of Rāma as

none other than Hari incarnate possessing all virtues and no trace of blemishes, it is necessary to know Madhva's conception of the personality of the Supreme *Brahman* Hari. The Supreme Lord is a great centre of consciousness, will, force and action and as a unit whose strength and capacities are beyond measure "परो मात्रया तन्वा वृधान" (*Ṛgveda* VII. 99. 1).

Madhva recognises this Supreme Reality as both knowledge and knower, bliss and blissful. Madhva emphasises, with the help of *Śrutis* and *Purāṇas* etc., the potential energy of God's immanant control through and through the entire finite reality consisting of the sentient and the insentient in all stages of their existence and activity. Nothing exists anywhere far or near without being subject to His jurisdiction and control, energisation and actualisation. Hari is free from blemishes, shortcomings etc., which qualify the human beings.

Vālmīki has portrayed Rāma as having extraordinary merit of remaining most often at his own highest level. He seldom fell behind. If at any time he did, the conditions that determined this decline, could be traced. As a human, Rāma stands almost immaculate, as unapproachable as a man, as a husband, as a friend, as an ally in peace and war, as a king etc. The crowned heads, great warriors, saints and sages—all alike bowed to Him in reverence. Even the brothers considered Rāma to be head and shoulders above them—far away in reach of character and entitled to their utmost obeisance. Rāma did great deeds, commanded great armies and conducted significant campaigns.

To Madhva, Rāma is *Puruṣottama,* as declared by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavadgītā*—

यो लोकत्रयमाविश्य बिभर्त्यव्यय ईश्वरः ॥
यस्मात्क्षरमतीतोऽहमक्षरादपि चोत्तमः ।
अतोऽस्मि लोके वेदे च प्रथितः पुरुषोत्तमः ॥

(XV. 17-18)

If Vālmīki has portrayed Rāma as a human being endowed with all the human frailties, emotions, depressions etc. Madhva,

with all his unstinted devotion, views Rāma as the very embodiment of virtues associated with Supreme Reality and not given to any distractions, emotional upheavals etc. The situations events, episodes etc., are to dovetailed into the narration as to fit into the compass of the supreme sovereignty and the attendant features of virtues and blemishness.

In the seventh chapter of *Chāndogya Upaniṣad,* Nārada is shown to approach Sanat Kumāra seeking the highest knowledge and in the course of the discussion, after detailing the pre-eminence of *Prāṇa* as the highest *Sādhaka* among the hierarchy of gods, it is established that the Supreme God viz., Viṣṇu alone is superior to *Mukhya Prāṇa* and the highest of all and is designated as *Satya* and Nārada is advised to seek out that *Satya* and His *Guṇapūrṇatva*.

Satyam is called *Satyavāk* and *Satya Saṁkalpa. Satyavāk* gains importance in *Rāmāyaṇa* not because it tries to substantiate the truth of the uttered word of Rāma but to prove the precedence of *Satya Saṁkalpa,* in that uttered word. The very purpose of the *Avatāra* of Lord Viṣṇu is to establish that at no time is the word of Viṣṇu falsified in respect of anyone. But as regards all others, their words/boons or curses become subject to nullification or alteration by the will of the Supreme God. Madhva explains the circumstances in which the boons conferred by Brahmā, Śiva etc., are rendered invalid.

"Viṣṇu had Himself created Brahmā as the world preceptor and does not, therefore, falsify Brahmā's word in relation to good people at any time. Even in respect of wicked people, He does not invalidate the word if it relates to other worlds. But Janārdana sometimes frustrates it if it relates to this world, only in the case of the wicked people, in order to remind about His own Supreme sovereignty. Sometimes the Lord Vāyu also under Viṣṇu's command invalidates (the boons of others like Rudra etc.), inferior to him in rank and grade, to remind people surely about his future Brahmāhood.

When the *Asuras* secure boons from Brahmā and Śiva by performing immense *Tapas* and turn out to be despots and torment the subjects, the Supreme manifests and assumes a form appropriate to the occasion. It is to establish and demonstrate His Supreme sovereignty, He takes an *Avatāra*, thereby indicating that not only those who dispense boons and curses but also the very boons and curses are all under His control. This exercise of control over boons and curses is delegated by God to the god Vāyu to an extent, who under god's behest nullifies the effect of the boons given by Śiva and other lower Gods.

Most of the boons relate to immunity from death. The following table gives the details of boons and curses that got invalidated or altered in the story of Rāma, according to Madhva.

(1) Tāḍakā was killed by Rāma though she had become impossible to be killed by any other due to the boon given to her by Brahmā.

(2) Mārīca who had obtained a boon of immunity from death from Brahmā, was, in the first encounter cast in the ocean and subsequently killed when he assumed the form of a golden deer.

(3) The great *Asura* named Atula obtained the boon from Brahmā with the intention of pervading the world. The saving clause was that he shall be killed when Hari gets vanquished.

Atula had entered the body of Paraśurāma knowing that the latter would never be vanquished. But when Paraśurāma advises Rāma to discharge his arrow at that *Asura* in his body, when Paraṣurāma commands Atula to come out, he comes out and turned into ashes by Rāma's arrow.

(4) Subāhu even though blessed by Śiva with immunity from death, Rāma shoots him to death.

(5) Ahalyā was cursed by her husband Gautama to be turned into a stone because of Indra's forcible coitus in the disguise of her husband. Rāma's seeing the stone restored her to her original woman form and was united with her husband.

(6) Kabandha: A Gandharva named Viśvāvasu, due to the

wrath of a *Brāhmaṇa* (named Sthūla Śarīra) was born to a *Rākṣasī*—Trijaṭā and named Dhanu on account of his cruel deeds. Indra with his *Vajrāyudha* struck on his head which entered his stomach. He too had obtained the boon of immunity from death from Brahmā. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa entered the fold of his hands and cut them asunder and buried him.

(7) Śabarī an *Apsarā* had been cursed by Indra's wife to be born in a low caste family for displaying her pride in Indra's presence. But her devotion to Rāma enabled her to attain redemption and reach God's own world.

(8) Sugrīva showed the body of Dundubhi thrown away by Vāli. By the mere contact of the toe of Rāma, the corpse of Dundubhi flies across a great distance and then pierces through the earth and kills all the *Rākṣasas* residing in *Rasātala* who had obtained from Śiva the boon of immunity from death.

(9) The seven Palmyra trees which Rāma struck down with one arrow and turned into ashes were *Rākṣasas*—sons of Diti. Their bodies were unassailable. They had resorted to penance to attain to the status of Brahmā.

(10) The arrow that struck down the seven trees pierced through the earth and burnt the *Rākṣasas* named Kumudi residing in the seven lower regions. They had been immune from death on the strength of Brahmā's word.

All these prove that Rāma as an *Avatāra* of Hari could undo and even alter the shape and content of the boons and curses conferred by others. That Rāma is in command of all events and personalities is also proved by this.

The episode relating to Durvāsā seeking instant entry into Rāma's presence and instant food from Rāma exemplifies how Rāma was a *Satyasaṁkalpa*. Rāma had commanded Lakṣmaṇa not to allow anybody into the chamber where he was engaged in a secret interview with Rudra. In the event of Lakṣmaṇa's failure to abide by his command, Rāma had promised to kill him (Lakṣmaṇa). Lakṣmaṇa was in a fix when Durvāsā

demanded immediate admittance to see Rāma. Lakṣmaṇa decided to incur the wrath of the Lord Rāma rather than the curse of Durvāsā. It was Śrī Rāma's *Saṁkalpa* that Lakṣmaṇa should precede Him in returning to His abode—*Vaikuṇṭha* and accordingly commanded him which was equivalent to killing him.

Throughout the narration, Madhva emphasises that Lakṣmī represented by Sītā is ever associated with the Lord because she is *Samanā* (She to whom the Supreme Person (*Vā*) is equal (*Sama*) is point of pervasion in time and space is *Samanā*). She has no separation from Rāma.

Madhva throws a new light on the incident which leads to the banishment of Sītā to the forest.

The *Asuras* named Suranakas performed austere penance to Brahmā and sought the boon of assured *Mokṣa* despite their committing heinous crimes. Brahmā laced it with a condition that they would have their desire fulfilled so long as they did not indulge in any act that would cause the separation of the divine couple. The Suranakas, who took their birth in the earth deluded by the *Māyā* of Sītā reviled Rāma in several ways and spread the accusation that Rāma had taken back Sītā who was in the custody of Rāvaṇa.

Rāma validates the word of Brahmā and throws the Suranakas into hell. He makes a display of separation of Sītā from Him even though both are inseparable eternally.

Rāma's personality, handsomeness, resoluteness, graciousness, valour, fondness towards Hanumān as a devotee, discernment stand out in bold relief in this narrative.



Śakti Worship by Rāma in Devī Bhāgavata

—*Kalyana Chowdhury*

In the thirtieth chapter Rāma's mind
Was full of agony as beloved Sītā
Was abducted by Rāvaṇa and confined.

To console him Nārada appeared at once
And, advised him the overall victory to attain
By *Śakti* worship of *Navarātra*
To kill the demon and Sītā to regain.

Of creation, protection and destruction
This Deity is the source, you can always feel
Not even the leaf of a tree can shake
Without this Primal Power's will.

Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśa and Indra
Worshipped Devī in days of yore
Bhṛgu, Bṛhaspati, Vasiṣṭha, Kaśyapa
And Viśwāmitra also did adore.

Depicting the glory of Mother Divine
Nārada dispelled the mournful mist
And to invoke in the month of Āświna
For the worship he agreed to be the priest.

With the wonderful image of Mother Durgā
Rāma erected the holy shrine
And worshipped Her with boundless devotion
Fasting for days, the remarkable nine.

On the significant eighth night Devī appeared
Responding to Rāma's sincere vow
Bestowing the boon of victory She said,—
"You may kill your wicked enemy now.

In the season of spring in Sri Lanka
Worship Me with devotion again;
Returning with Sītā to capital Ayodhya
As an ideal righteous king you will reign."

She revealed to Rāma that he came
As Viṣṇu's incarnation on earth
To destroy the evil forces to add
To all the saints' and aspirants' mirth.

She also mentioned at the same time
His previous incarnations and tasks divine
To enhance his courage and confidence thus
With immortal internal strength to combine.

At the end of *Vijaya Daśamī,* Rāma
With the aid of Sugrīva and monkey clan
Built the bridge on the ocean and reached
Sri Lanka to fulfil the cosmic plan.



Rāmo Vigrahavān Dharmaḥ

—R. Narasimhan

God incarnates in this world to redeem mankind and establish *Dharma.* Whenever *Dharna* faces damage and *Adharma* tries to overcome it, God incarnates in this world in a form dear to Him and in a manner liked by Him. *Gītā* reveals the same in the following popular verses—

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्॥
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे॥

(IV. 7-8)

With this object in view Lord Śrīman Nārāyaṇa had assumed different *Avatāras* at different times and our sacred texts like *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* and *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Purāṇas* bring out the details of all such *Avatāras* of Lord Śrī Viṣṇu, His *Avatāra* as Śrī Rāma is of great significance to human beings.

Śrī Rāma is known as a *Puruṣottama,* Sage Vālmīki himself has defined as who can be called a 'पुरुषोत्तम' thus—

शुभं वा यदि वा पापं यो हि वाक्यमुदीरितम्।
सत्येन परिगृह्णाति स वीरः पुरुषोत्तमः॥

(IV. 30. 72)

One who keeps up his promise at any cost whether it yields good or bad effect and upholds it is indeed a 'मर्यादा पुरुषोत्तम'. Ayodhya itself was called 'सत्यनामा' and all its rulers were 'सत्यवादी' Śrī Rāma was 'सत्यपराक्रम, सत्यसन्ध' and a 'सत्यप्रतिश्रवः'. He ruled his kingdom with 'सत्य' (रामः सत्येन लोकान् जयति).

The Vālmīki-Nārada 'प्रश्न' brings out all the important great

qualities of Śrī Rāma, which could be rarely found in other persons. He is a 'षोडशकलाब्रह्म'.

Why Śrī Rāma is being worshipped by one and all in preference to other forms of Godhood, can/will be understood by a reference to the following verses—

(1) रामो विग्रहवान् धर्मः (2) रामोद्विर्नाभिभाषते
(3) अनृतं नोक्तपूर्वं मे न च वक्ष्ये कदाचन।
(4) अक्षय्यं मधुहन्तारं जानामि त्वां सुरेश्वरम्॥

(I. 76. 17)

(5) यश्च रामं न पश्येत्तु यं च रामो न पश्यति।
निन्दितः सर्वलोकेषु स्वात्माप्येनं विगर्हते॥

(II. 17. 14)

(6) अप्यहं जीवितं जह्यां त्वां वा सीते सलक्ष्मणाम्॥
न तु प्रतिज्ञां संश्रुत्य ब्राह्मणेभ्यो विशेषतः।

(III. 10. 18-19)

(7) सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते।
अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद् व्रतं मम॥

(VI. 18. 33)

(8) मित्रभावेन सम्प्राप्तं न त्यजेयं कथंचन।
दोषो यद्यपि तस्य स्यात् सतामेतदगर्हितम्॥

(VI. 18. 3)

(9) धर्मात्मा सत्यसंधश्च रामो दाशरथिर्यदि।
पौरुषे चाप्रतिद्वन्द्वस्तदैनं जहि रावणिम्॥

(VI. 90. 69)

(10) रामो रामो राम इति प्रजानामभवन् कथाः।
रामभूतं जगदभूद् रामे राज्यं प्रशासति॥

(VI. 128. 102)

Śrī Rāma never speaks lies. He has one word only which he considers more than His life. He is the protector of those who surrender to Him at His lotus feet. He was prepared to offer 'अभयम्' even to Rāvaṇa if he became 'शरणागत'. It was *Śrī Rāma Nāma* that prevailed everywhere when He ruled Ayodhya.

Lord Śiva proclaims that 'राम नाम' is equivalent to *Śrī Viṣṇu Sahasranāma*.

राम रामेति रामेति रमे रामे मनोरमे।
सहस्त्रनाम तत्तुल्यं राम नाम वरानने॥

Śrī Rāma Suprabhātam is very popular and being recited with respect in all places.

कौसल्या सुप्रजा राम पूर्वासन्ध्या प्रवर्तते।
उत्तिष्ठ नरशार्दूल कर्त्तव्यं दैवमाह्निकम्॥

In his *Pādukā Sahasram* Śrī Vedānta Deśika (an *Ācārya* of the 13th century) praises Lord Śrī Rāma's sandals thus—

राम पाद सहधर्मचारिणीं पादुके निखिल पातकच्छिदाम्।
त्वामशेषजगतामधीश्वरीं भावयामि भरताधिदेवताम्॥

(III. 79)

The same *Ācārya* in his 'रघुवीर गद्यम्' has praised Śrī Rāma thus—

जय जय महावीर! अनन्यशासनीय! असहायशूर।
अनपाय साहस ! सत्यव्रत! सर्वजनसंमानित।
सर्वकर्मसमाराध्य ! राघवसिंह! श्रीरामभद्र। नमस्ते पुनस्ते नमः।

He was a *Mahavīra* not only on account of valour but also due to his upholding of *Dharma* and *Satya*.

Śrī Rāma was the 'कुलदैवतं कुलधनं' of saint Tyāgarāja and Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa. Goswāmījī worshipped Śrī Rāma as 'मर्यादा पुरुषोत्तम' and we got his 'रामचरितमानस' a masterpiece of Hindi literature. *Śrī Kamba Rāmāyaṇa* gives a vivid and good portrait of Śrī Rāma in a south Indian language. Bhadrācalam Rāmadāsa was also an ardent devotee of Śrī Rāma. To saint Kabīradāsa, Śrī Rāma was everything 'सर्वस्व'.

Sage Viśwāmitra declared in the court of Daśaratha that Śrī Rāma is none other than the virtues personified. He is the foremost of warriors. He is the seat of *Tapas* etc.

एष विग्रहवान् धर्म एष वीर्यवतां वरः।
एष विद्याधिको लोके तपसश्च परायणम्॥

एषोऽस्त्रान् विविधान् वेत्ति त्रैलोक्ये सचराचरे।
नैनमन्यः पुमान् वेत्ति न च वेत्स्यन्ति केचन॥

(I. 21. 10-11)

The subjects of Ayodhya declare Śrī Rāma as an embodiment of virtues.

रामः सत्पुरुषो लोके सत्यः सत्यपरायणः॥
साक्षाद् रामाद् विनिर्वृत्तो धर्मश्चापि श्रिया सह।

(II. 2. 29)

He is an attractor of the eyes of even men, not to speak of women.

चन्द्रकान्ताननं राममतीव प्रियदर्शनम्॥
रूपौदार्यगुणैः पुंसां दृष्टिचित्तापहारिणम्।

(III. 3. 28-29)

Śrī Rāma is furnished with six great qualities, according to the subjects of Ayodhya.

आनृशंस्यमनुक्रोशः श्रुतं शीलं दमः शमः।
राघवं शोभयन्त्येते षड् गुणाः पुरुषर्षभम्॥

(II. 33. 12)

यत्र रामो भयं नात्र नास्ति तत्र पराभवः।
स हि शूरो महाबाहुः पुत्रो दशरथस्य च॥

(II. 48. 15-16)

Where there is Rāma, there would be no fear, there would be no defeat. He is a *Mahāvīra* always protecting us. Among other virtues, He is a 'ब्रह्मचारी' follower of 'एक पत्नीव्रत,'.

न रामः परदारान् स चक्षुर्भ्यामपि पश्यति।

(II. 72. 48)

He is an obedient son.

लक्ष्मीश्चन्द्रादपेयाद् वा हिमवान् वा हिमं त्यजेत्।
अतीयात् सागरो वेलां न प्रतिज्ञामहं पितुः॥

(II. 112. 18)

To Rāma keeping his words, was more than everything while in the forest, Śrī Rāma declares that the world is 'धर्मसारः'.

धर्मादर्थः प्रभवति धर्मात् प्रभवते सुखम्।
धर्मेण लभते सर्वं धर्मसारमिदं जगत्॥

(III. 9. 30)

Rāvaṇa's emissaries praise Śrī Rāma as the follower of *Dharma*—

यस्मिन् न चलते धर्मो यो धर्मं नातिवर्तते।
यो ब्राह्ममस्त्रं वेदांश्च वेद वेदविदां वरः॥

(VI 28. 19)

Rāvaṇa's wife, queen Mandodarī was aware of the true nature of Śrī Rāma and that he was a 'धर्मात्मन्'.

क्षमाशीलस्तथा रामः सत्यवादी च राघवः।
धर्म नित्यो महाराजः शरणागतवत्सलः॥

(VI. 58)

व्यक्तमेष महायोगी परमात्मा सनातनः॥

(VI. 111. 11)

अनादिमध्यनिधनो महतः परमो महान्।
तमसः परमो धाता शङ्खचक्रगदाधरः॥

(VI. 111. 12)

श्रीवत्सवक्षा नित्यश्रीरजय्यः शाश्वतो ध्रुवः।
मानुषं रूपमास्थाय विष्णुः सत्यपराक्रमः॥

(VI. 111. 13)

सर्वैः परिवृतो देवैर्वानरत्वमुपागतैः।

(VI. 111. 14)

Śrī Rāma exhibited a very rare quality during his first war with Rāvaṇa.

प्रयाहि जानामि रणार्दितस्त्वं प्रविश्य रात्रिंचरराज लङ्काम्।
आश्वस्य निर्याहि रथी च धन्वी तदा बलं प्रेक्ष्यसि मे रथस्थः॥

(VI. 59. 143)

This mercy shown to his enemy at the battlefield shows that He is 'विग्रहवान् धर्मः' (*Dharma* personified). Śrī Rāma during his fight with the *Rākṣasas* was identified as *Śrīman Nārāyaṇa.*

यस्य विक्रममासाद्य राक्षसा निधनं गताः।
तं मन्ये राघवं वीरं नारायणमनामयम्॥

(VI. 72. 11)

Let us, worship Śrī Rāma joined with Śrī Lakṣmaṇa and Śrī Sītā and get blessed with prosperity.

दक्षिणे लक्ष्मणो धन्वी वामतो जानकी शुभा।
पुरतोमारुतिर्यस्य तं वन्दे रघुनन्दनम्॥

* * *

लोकाः समस्ताः सुखिनो भवन्तु।



श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं मनसो मनो यद्
वाचो ह वाचं स उ प्राणस्य प्राणः।
चक्षुषश्चक्षुरतिमुच्य धीराः
प्रेत्यास्माल्लोकादमृता भवन्ति॥

"Since He is the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, the Speech of speech, the Life of life, and the Eye of the eye, therefore the intelligent men after giving up (self-identification with the senses) and renouncing this world, become immortal."

—*Kenopaniṣad* (I.2)

ज्ञेयं च परमात्मानं यज्ज्ञात्वा मुच्यते भयात्।
अनात्मनि शरीरादावात्मबुद्धिस्तु या भवेत्॥
सैव माया तयैवासौ संसारः परिकल्प्यते।
रूपे द्वे निश्चिते पूर्वं मायायाः कुलनन्दन॥

"Only by knowing the supreme reality one becomes free from all fears. The assumption that I am the body which is really non-self, is really speaking *Māyā*. *Māyā* is the real cause of the worldly expansion. It has got two aspects (विक्षेप and आवरण)."

—(*A.R. Araṇ*. 4—21.22)

Rāmāyaṇa: The Eternal Fountain of Indian Culture

—*Dr. S. R. Sehgal*

Traditions mean an aggregate of customs, beliefs and practice that give continuity to a culture and civilization which mould the shape of a nation. No writer can contribute a significant piece of literature unless he has knowledge and understanding of the regions of the country and more so of its well-established traditions. A great artist is like a robin who builds his nest out of the twigs around him and seeks inspiration from his surroundings without ignoring the hard facts of the progressive elements. Here comes the place of Epics in a nation. If the meadows, groves and streams of a nation give physical nourishment, its thinkers provide consciousness of a unifying culture and its collective will fostered by common traditions.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* has, therefore been rightly proclaimed as—*Ādi-Kāvya* and Kālidāsa has made a reference to this in his National Epic *Raghuvaṁśam* (I. 4). He was profoundly influenced by the writings of *Ādi-kavi*, nay all poets of Sanskrit literature have freely drawn upon the epics for their material but in the matter of language they are indebted to the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. His descriptions of the Flora and Fauna now profusely described in the form of environmental study in modern terminology, are simply inimitable. There is no exaggeration in saying that the whole of the Sanskrit literature bears the stamp of his greatness. His spirit, grace, and genius find echos in all writings and more so in literatures of regional languages. Its spiritual direction, its intellectual amplitude, its artistic expressions, its political forms and economic arrangements

all find utterance in fresh, vital and shining phrases.

Vālmīki was a versatile genius of the country who had the super-vision to preserve ecology in the nation. He was closely followed by another great visionary called Kālidāsa. His first poem—*Ṛtusaṁhāram* is nothing but a lyric on 'Ecology' a study on interaction between nature and man. Neither of them can live in alienation. The great lyricist has superbly described six seasons as preserved in Vedic literature. However his basic indebtedness goes to Vālmīki as will be clear by the following illustrations:

.......रक्तांशुका नववधूरिव भाति भूमिः।
प्रभिन्नवैदूर्यनिभैस्तृणाङ्कुरैः समाचिता प्रोत्थितकन्दलीदलैः॥

(*Ṛtū.* VI. 19)

विभाति शुक्लेतर रत्नभूषिता वराङ्गनेव क्षितिरिन्द्रगोपकैः

(*Ṛtū.* II. 5.)

Now compare this with *Rāmāyaṇa*:

बालेन्द्रगोपान्तरचित्रितेन विभाति भूमिर्नवशाद्वलेन।
गात्रानुपृक्तेन शुकप्रभेण नारीव लाक्षोक्षितकम्बलेन॥

(*Rām.* IV. 28.24)

Again, in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the peacocks are described as spreading their tails in dancing and singing in this rainy season.

क्वचित् प्रनृत्तैः क्वचिदुन्नदद्भिः क्वचिच्च वृक्षाग्रनिषण्णकायैः।
व्यालम्बबर्हाभरणैर्मयूरैर्वनेषु संगीतमिव प्रवृत्तम्॥

(IV. 28.37)

In the *Ṛtūsaṁhāram* also the dance of the peacocks is accompanied by their music and dalliance:

सदा मनोज्ञं स्वनदुत्सवोत्सुकं विकीर्ण विस्तीर्णकलापशोभितम्।
ससंभ्रमालिङ्गन चुम्बनाकुलं प्रवृत्तनृत्यं कुलमद्य बर्हिणाम्॥

(11.16)

Moreover the *Rāmāyaṇic* descriptions of *Arjuna*, *Aśoka* (IV.1, 29)/ (IV. 28, 9)/ *Kadamba* (IV. 28, 26), *Karṇikāra* (V.15.8), *Ketaka* (IV. 28,28), *Kovidāra* (II. 84, 3), *Nīlotpala* (IV. 30.24) and a host of other flowers must have influenced the author of the *Ṛtūsaṁhāra*. The master artist earned the reputation of a poet of flowers. Compare the same in the *Ṛtūsaṁhāram*: *Aśoka*

(VI. 5, 16), *Arjuna* (II.17 111,B); *Kadamba* (II, 17; 20; 23 III 13), *Karṇikāra* (VI. 5, 20; 27), *Ketaka* (II. 17; 20; 23; 27), *Kovidāra* (III. 6), *Nīlotpala* (II.3) so vividly described by the high priest of Nature. Now we come to Bhāsa, the earliest dramatist of Sanskrit. He is supposed to be an author of thirteen plays in Sanskrit. He was praised by Kālidāsa, the top-ranking poet of our great country. He has lauded him in his play—*Mālavikāgnimitram*—(1.1-4) *Prathitayasasām—Bhāsa—Saumillaka—Kaviputrādīnāṁ prabandhān atiricya vartamānakaveḥ Kālidāsasya Kṛyāyām katham bahumānaḥ*—how can there be any regard of the assembly for the play of Kālidāsa, a modern poet, leaving aside the compositions of Bhāsa, Saumillaka, Kaviputra and others of established repute.

Out of the thirteen plays of Bhāsa, two are based on the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. These are—*Pratimā* and *Abhiṣeka*. The first play means the statue of Daśaratha which is beautifully woven around the death of Daśaratha. Rāma's departure to the forest upset the whole of Ayodhya. The pathetic description is moving—*Nāyodhyā taṁ vināyodhyā sāyodhyā yatra Rāghavaḥ* (III. 24). Ayodhya without Rāma was no Ayodhya and that real Ayodhya was where there was Rāghava.

Abhiṣeka Nāṭaka deals with the story of Rāma as given in the *Kiṣkindhā, Sundara* and *Yuddha Kāṇḍas* of the epic. Among many beautiful descriptions is one, division of the waters of the ocean when Rāma passes through it. It is the only play, according to Dr. Sarup, where the master artist adorned the creation of figures of speech in the description of the ocean (IV. 3-18).

Next Kālidāsa has produced his master creation—*Raghuvaṁśam* which describes the race of *Sūryavaṁśa*. Like the *Śākuntala* play it is the most popular poem which served for centuries as a text book for learning *Sanskrit*. The other companion volumes were *Amarakośa* and *Aṣṭādhyāyī* right from Kashmir to Kanyakumari in our country.

Aśvaghoṣa in his two poems—*Buddhacaritam* as well as *Saundaranandam* refers to Vālmīki and to the *Rāmāyaṇa*. He has made several references to Epic Mythology. The description

of the sleeping women in the *Buddhacaritam* bears a close resemblance to that in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The poet Bhaṭṭi has chosen the story of Rāma in order to illustrate the rules of grammar in his *Rāvaṇavadha*, more usually styled as *Bhaṭṭi-Kāvya*, *Jānakīharaṇa* of Kumāradāsa, too, is based on the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Bhavabhūti's two plays—*Mahāvīracaritam* as well as *Uttararāmacaritam* are based on the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The latter confirms that the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* was prevalent in his times. His pathetic descriptions have no parallel in Sanskrit literature. Like Kālidāsa he was too, an artist and a producer of plays. His stage productions broke the hearts of the readers or spectators as goes a saying in Sanskrit. Murārī, the author of the *Anargharāghva* called himself—*Bāla-Vālmīkī* Rājaśekhara, authored *Bālarāmāyaṇa*. It is a play in ten acts containing a large number of verses of which 203 are in *Śārdūlavikrīḍitam* and 89 in *Sragdharā*. The Buddhist poet—Diṅnāga was the author of the drama—*Kundamālā* woven around the episode of the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Like Bhavabhūti he is also a poet of pathos. *Hanumannāṭaka* is available in two versions, one in ten acts by the poet Madhusūdana Mishra and the other in fourteen acts by Dāmodara Mishra. *Adbhuta-Darpaṇa* by Mahādeva begins with the episode of Aṅgada going as a messenger to the court of Rāvana and takes to the story up to the coronation of Rāma. Jainas did not lag behind the deeds of Rāma. In the eighth century Svayambhū composed his *Pauma Cariu* in *Apabhraṁśa* in which Rāma is described as a devotee of Jina.

The prophetic pronouncement of the sage Vālmīki has so far not been belied:

As long as mountain ranges stand
And rivers flow upon the earth:
So long will this *Rāmāyaṇa*
Survive upon the lips of men.



The Divine Reason Behind Rāma's Incarnation

The Curse of Sage Nārada

—Swami Jyotirmayaṇanda

The reason why Lord Viṣṇu incarnated as Rāma, the son of King Daśaratha and Queen Kausalyā, is conveyed in a colourful mystic story about Sage Nārada. This story relates what happened when the Sage's intellect once became clouded by pride and delusion:

Once upon a time, Sage Nārada was practising deep meditation in a beautiful cave near the banks of the Ganges. Seeing the heights of *Samādhi* attained by the sage, the celestial lord of gods, Indra, became apprehensive, thinking that Nārada was practising severe austerity to attain Indra-hood. He therefore requested Kāma Deva, the god of love (Cupid), to present temptations before the sage and thus to disturb his practice of austerity.

Accordingly, Kāma Deva, alongwith his attendants, exercised all the powers of allurement against the mind of Nārada, but the sage remained unperturbed. When Nārada could not be shaken, Kāma Deva became afraid of the sage and, seeking his forgiveness, returned to his heavenly abode.

Reflecting on these developments, subtle pride arose in Nārada. He thought to himself, "I have conquered Kāma. I have excelled many sages and saints who could not prevail against the celestial temptations." With such a sense of pride swelling within his heart, Nārada went to Lord Śiva and related to him all that had happened—how Kāma had exercised all his powers, and yet failed in his efforts.

Lord Śiva smiled and said, "Oh Nārada, you are a devotee

of Lord Viṣṇu. By His Grace nothing is impossible for you. However, please do not relate this experience of yours to Lord Viṣṇu."

Śrī Nārada then went to Brahmā, the Creator, and told him how he had defeated Kāma. Lord Brahmā praised him and also advised him not to relate his experience to Lord Viṣṇu. However, Nārada did not heed to their advice, and hastened to *Vaikuṇṭha*, where Lord Viṣṇu dwelled.

Lord Viṣṇu welcomed the sage and asked, "Oh sage, I have not seen you for a long time. Where have you been?" Śrī Nārada then told everything about his confrontation with Kāma, and concluded saying, "Oh Lord, it was all by your Grace that I accomplished this most difficult task, a task in which even great sages of yore had failed." Lord Viṣṇu smiled and said, "Nothing is impossible for you, O sage. Kāma is no match for you!" But realizing that Nārada had developed pride and was falling prey to *māyā* (cosmic illusion), Lord Viṣṇu decided to cure him of his malady with a most ingenious scheme.

Departing from Lord Viṣṇu, the sage resumed his normal habits of traveling through the various *lokas* or worlds. Soon he passed through a kingdom which he had never seen before, a kingdom in which all the men and women were exceedingly handsome.

The ruler of that kingdom was King Śīlanidhi, and he had a beautiful daughter named Viśwamohinī (enchanter of the world). The time had arrived for the beautiful princess to choose a suitable husband for herself, and for that purpose her father had arranged a *swayambara*. According to this method of marriage, many princes were invited to present themselves before the princess, who would consider each suitor and then place her garland on the one she chose for her husband.

Curious to find out more about that kingdom, Śrī Nārada went to the palace and introduced himself to the king. King Śīlanidhi was delighted to have the company of the sage and brought his daughter before Nārada so that the sage might give

his blessing to her and foretell her future.

When the sage looked into the astrological conditions of the princess and examined her palm, he realized that whoever married the princess would become the greatest in the world. He thought within himself, "Why shouldn't I become the blessed suitor of this glorious princess and attain supreme greatness?" However, hiding his feelings, he told the king that his daughter was endowed with excellent qualities, and then he gave his blessings to her.

After seeing the princess, Nārada's mind could find no rest. He thought within himself, "How am I to marry the princess? My austerity-torn body is thin and emaciated, and the princess would not be attracted to me." Soon an idea entered his mind, and Nārada invoked the presence of Lord Viṣṇu, his best friend and benefactor, who would surely help him secure the hand of the princess.

When Lord Viṣṇu appeared before him shining in His Divine Glory, sage Nārada said, "Oh Lord, You are the giver of all desires. I desire to marry Viśwamohinī—the daughter of King Śīlanidhi. For this purpose I want to have a body just like Yours, because it is only through Your beauty that I could secure the princess for myself." Lord Viṣṇu smiled at the power of His own *māyā*, which had degraded the mind of the sage to such an extent, and said, "Oh sage, I will do all that is good for you." Thus saying, Lord Viṣṇu disappeared. When Nārada looked at himself, he found his body transformed—he had the body of Lord Viṣṇu!

Nārada then hastened his steps to the *swayambara* hall where kings and princes from many different lands had assembled, each desiring to win the hand of Princess Viśwamohinī. Nārada took a foremost seat so that the princess was sure to behold his beautiful personality. At the proper time, the princess entered the hall with a garland in her hands, her eyes moving eagerly in all directions in order to choose a husband. As she

looked towards Nārada she immediately recoiled from him and turned away. Thinking that perhaps she had missed seeing him. Nārada moved to another seat closer to the princess. But the princess again turned away from him. Nārada eagerly moved from one seat to another, and the princess continued to avoid him. All of a sudden a dazzling figure entered the hall. It was Lord Viṣṇu Himself, and the princess readily offered the garland to Him. When the couple departed, Nārada became exceedingly distressed.

At that time there were two messengers of Lord Śiva (*Śiva-gaṇas*) who were amused at the strange behavior of the sage. Unable to contain their amusement, they whispered into his ears, "Oh sage, why don't you go and look at your face in that pool of water near by?" Nārada went over to the pool and looked at himself, and to his horror and frustration saw that he had the hideous face of a monkey. Though his body was most beautiful, this hideous head had created such a strange contrast that he had become a ridiculous figure.

All his dreams of glory and greatness were shattered to pieces. His mind became so filled with wrath that he turned to Śiva's attendants and pronounced a curse, "You wretched souls! You who have laughed at my distress, may you incarnate as demons and suffer untold miseries at the hands of monkeys!"

At that very moment Nārada saw Lord Viṣṇu and the princess driving by in a celestial chariot. Lord Viṣṇu stopped before the sage and asked, "Oh sage, why are you so troubled? May I be of some help to you?" At this Nārada became doubly incensed and said, "You, Lord Hari (Viṣṇu), since You have no one greater than Yourself who can constrain You, You continue to play tricks on Your devotees and delight at their misery. Today I am going to teach You a lesson. I am pronouncing a curse on You: May You incarnate as a human being, and may You pine for the princess for whom You gave me a monkey face. And further, because of my monkey face,

it is the monkeys who will be Your friends in this miserable predicament."

Lord Viṣṇu accepted the curse of Nārada. And because of His immense compassion for the sage, He removed the force of *Māyā* that had deluded the mind of Nārada. The moment the veil of *Māyā* was lifted from Nārada's vision, Nārada saw that there was nobody there—neither that princess, nor that city, nor that king. He realized that the princess had been none other than Goddess Lakṣmī and the entire set-up had been just an illusion created before his mind in order to help him.

Then, Nārada trembling with fear, fell at the feet of Lord Viṣṇu, pleading, "Oh Lord, render my curse upon You void. Please do not let Your *Māyā* delude my mind again. I seek refuge in You."

Lord Viṣṇu then lifted up the sage and comforted him. He told Śrī Nārada that he should not grieve, that the stream of devotion will ever flow on in his heart, and that he will not be overpowered by *māyā* any more. However, Lord Viṣṇu added, "Your curse will not be rendered void. I will incarnate on the earth for the destruction of demons, and play the role of a human being for such is My Divine plan."

After receiving this blessing, Nārada flew off towards the heavenly realms, but on his way he was intercepted by the two Śiva *gaṇas* whom he had cursed while gripped by anger. They begged to have the curse withdrawn, but this was not possible. So Nārada minimized the curse, saying, "You will become demons, but not ordinary demons. You will be endowed with immense power and prosperity and glory. You will conquer the whole world and Lord Viṣṇu will manifest on the earth to fight with you. Finally, Lord Viṣṇu will kill you both and then you will attain liberation and become one with Lord Viṣṇu." Hearing this, the Śiva *gaṇas* then adored the feet of Nārada and departed to their world.

In course of time those *gaṇas* incarnated in the form of the

great demons Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa and Lord Viṣṇu incarnated on this earth in order to destroy them and fulfil a Divine plan.

X X X

By Relating this wonderful story of Nārada and his monkey face, Saint Tulasidāsajī gives us a mythological reason for the incarnation of *Brahman* in the form of Rāma. But at the same time, he teaches many other important spiritual lessons in a subtle way.

This parable reminds the aspirant that it is very difficult to eradicate egoistic impurities. Generally, one impurity is overcome and then another comes to take its place. Like Nārada, one may overcome lust, and then as a result, he develops pride about how pure and virtuous he is! An aspirant should not develop pride on the basis of any spiritual attainment. Spiritual pride is more subtle and terrible than pride based on material attainment, and if is allowed to grow in one's personality, it will bring about a terrible downfall.

One may practise all types of austerity and intellectually grasp the most profound philosophical truths of *Vedānta*, but if he has not brought about the perfect integration of his personality through the practice of integral *Yoga*, then although one part of his personality may be divine, another part may lie unchanged—like Nārada's face of a monkey! On the spiritual path, one should seek the internal transformation of his entire personality and not mere outer change.

In the practice of integral *Yoga*, Tulasīdāsa places great importance on the promotion of *Bhakti* or devotion for the removal of impurities. Profound love for God is like the Ganges River. It flows into one's unconscious and washes away pride, passion, hate and other impurities with ease and eventually dissolves away the very ego itself.

Liberation is the Goddess of Prosperity, Lakṣmī, who cannot be won by an aspirant if he does not allow such a total

transformation to occur within himself. As long as there is a monkey face, the goddess of liberation will turn her face away.

The story also illustrates how the Divine Plan operates in a mysterious manner to help an aspirant evolve. An aspirant may ask God for something according to his understanding, but the Divinity will grant him only what he really needs for his spiritual evolution. In this way, God is like a doctor. A good doctor does not do what his patient asks him to do if it will harm the patient. He does only what the patient needs to become strong and healthy. Similarly, even when the desires of an aspirant are frustrated, behind this frustration there lies the loving hand of God ever intent upon leading him from darkness to light.

This story about Nārada also helps an aspirant gain a more penetrating understanding about the "divine" and the "demoniac" in human personality. Because of Nārada's curse, the divine messengers of Lord Śiva had to incarnate as demons and remain in that degraded state until released by death. Thus, Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa, the two most dreaded demons in the *Rāmayaṇa*, had a divine origin and were merely playing the role of demons in accord with the Divine Plan.

Like Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa, every human being is a blend of god and demon. To use the terminology of the *Gītā*, everyone is a blend of divine qualities (*Daivī Sampat*) and demoniac qualities (*Āsurī Sampat*). No one is all-virtuous or all-evil.

The world contains both good and evil, light and darkness, but the intrinsic energy behind both is the same. The energy that flows through all human personalities is essentially divine, but due to mental complexes that energy becomes cramped or restricted. For example, love for others is intrinsic in the human heart; but due to ignorance, the energy that should have flowed in the form of love begins to flow in the form of anger and hate. It is the same energy, just "short-circuited" into a degraded form. Like electricity flowing through wires, that divine energy

works wonders when it flows correctly through the channels of a pure mind, but becomes terribly destructive when a short-circuit develops.

In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, whenever Rāma destroys a mighty demon, a light emerges from the demon and enters into Rāma, showing that the demon's spirit has become liberated—one with Rāma. This implies that every demon was essentially a divine entity, but the divine energy was temporarily imprisoned, so to speak, waiting to be released by the *Avatāra* of God.

Similarly, as devotion advances, the Rāma within you kills the demons within you. When a negative quality becomes the target of Rāma's arrow, that negative quality becomes transformed. Where there was anger, love unfolds; where there was pride, humility grows; where there was frustration, profound fulfilment develops within your heart.



काहु न कोउ सुख दुख कर दाता । निज कृत करम भोग सबु भ्राता ॥ २ ॥
जोग बियोग भोग भल मंदा । हित अनहित मध्यम भ्रम फंदा ॥
जनमु मरनु जहँ लगि जग जालू । संपति बिपति करमु अरु कालू ॥ ३ ॥
धरनि धामु धनु पुर परिवारू । सरगु नरकु जहँ लगि ब्यवहारू ॥
देखिअ सुनिअ गुनिअ मन माहीं । मोह मूल परमारथु नाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

"No one is a source of delight or pain to another; everyone reaps the fruit of one's own actions, brother. Union and separation, pleasurable and painful experiences, friends, foes and neutrals—snares of delusion are these. Even so birth and death, prosperity and adversity, destiny and time and all the illusion of the world; lands, houses, wealth, town and family, heaven and hell, and all the phenomena of the world; nay, whatever is seen, heard or thought of with the mind has its root in ignorance: nothing exists in reality."

—*Mānasa* (II. 2-4)

Rāmakathā: Variegations and Negations

—*S. K. Garg*

After a curious comparative reading of *Rāma Kathā* literature, I concluded that most books (*Saṁskṛta*, fine literature; or Modern Indian languages) pertaining to the narrative of Rāma and His allies have their genesis in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*; and it is universally conceded, too. Evidently, these poets pay a grateful tribute (save a few) to the Great Sage:—

Bhavabhūti in his '*Mahāvīracaritam*' (700-800)—

प्राचेतसो मुनिवृषा प्रथमः कवीनां यत्पावनं रघुपतेः प्रणिनाय वृत्तम्।
भक्तस्य तत्र समरंसत मेऽपि वाचस्तत्सुप्रसन्नमनसः कृतिनो भजन्ताम्॥

(1/7)

also in '*Uttararāmacaritam*'—

इदं कविभ्यः पूर्वेभ्यो नमोवाकं प्रशास्महे।

(1/1)

Murāri in his '*Anargharāghavam*'—

मारिष, रामायणमिति शृणोषि तत्रभवतः कवित्वावतारप्रथमतीर्थस्य वल्मीकजन्मनो मुनेः सरस्वतीनिर्यासो यशःशरीरमिक्ष्वाकूणाम्।

(1/*after* 6)

Rājśekhar in his '*Bālarāmāyaṇa*'—

निर्भयगुरुर्व्यधत्त च वाल्मीकिकथां किमनुसृत्य।

(1/5)

Dāmodara Miśra in his '*Hanumannāṭakam*' /*Mahānāṭakam*—

विश्रामस्थानमेकं कविवरवचसां-----

(1/1)

Bhojarāja in his '*Campūrāmāyaṇam*' (1000-1100)—

वाल्मीकिगीतरघुपुंगवकीर्तिलेशै—
स्तृप्तिं करोमि कथमप्यधुना बुधानाम्।

(1/4)

Jayadeva in his '*Prasannarāghavam*' (1100-1200)—

मम पुनः कविकमलसद्मनि मुनौ वल्मीकजन्मनि मनः कौतुकितं.......

(1/*after* 8)

Kaṁban in his '*Kaṁbarāmāyaṇa*' (Tamil)—'Among the three personages who created the *Rāmāyaṇa* in oracle (*Saṁskṛta* language), I've followed the creation of the first poet, *Maharṣi* Vālmīki to compose this *Rāmāyaṇa* in Tamil couplets'.

Rājā Gonabuddha in his '*Raṁganātha Rāmāyaṇa* Telugu'— '---and all the pious souls would extol me by the grace of the first poet—Vālmīki'.

Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa in his '*Rāmacaritamānasa*' (Awadhī, *Saṁvat* 1631)—

बंदउँ मुनि पद कंजु रामायन जेहिं निरमयउ।

(1/14 *Gha*)

However, these latter poets have innovated, moulded, even distorted (Jaina poets, e.g., Raviṣeṇa in his *Padmapurāṇa/ Padmacarita*, 500-700) the prototypal *Rāmakathā* at will, for more than one reasons; either to extol their gracious Lord (Tulasī); or to give it a colour of social milieu of their times (Kṛttivāsa); also to save the protagonist Rāma or other characters from certain stigma of centuries; nay to look original (Jaina-poets); or spurn obscenity (Tulasī).

Messengers are despatched to fetch King Daśaratha to Janakapura:—

जनकेन समादिष्टा दूतास्ते क्लान्त वाहनाः।

(*Vālmīki. Bāla.* 8/1)

दूत अवधपुर पठवहु जाई। आनहिं नृप दसरथहि बोलाई॥

(*Mānasa. Bāla.* 287/1)

But in Kṛttivāsa Ojhā's—

'*Bengalā Rāmāyaṇa*' (1400—1500) hermit Viśwāmitra is asked to go himself and bring father Daśaratha. Inventing the reason

behind this change, Dr. Ramānāth Tripāṭhī writes in his doctoral thesis—'*Kṛttivāsī-Bengalā-Rāmāyaṇa aur Rāmacaritamānasa Kā Tulnātmaka Adhyayana*'—

'There is a tribe in Bengal namely—'Ghaṭaka'. A 'Ghaṭaka (i.e. match-maker) is the *Brāhmaṇa*-family-priest who contrives an alliance between a bride and a groom' (page 169, middle). To observe this social milieu of Bengal, Viśwāmitra has to undertake the job of a match-maker (also genealogist). He muses while on his way to Ayodhya—'I'm leaving for Ayodhya as a Ghaṭaka. My fame for contriving the weddings of the two brothers Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa would spread in the three quarters'—

ए कथा शुनिया मुनि भाविलेन मने।
घटक हइया जाइ अयोध्या भुवने॥
एइ यश आमार घूषिवे त्रिभुवने।
विवाह दिलाम आमि श्रीराम लक्ष्मणे॥

(*Kṛtti.*, P. 80-81 *Ādi.*) *Ibid.*

Goswāmījī loved this match-maker's inclusion of Kṛttivāsa so much that in his '*Gītāwalī*' (*Saṁvat* 1628—31) his thoughts reverted to Janaka's family-priest—Śatānanda; and he could not check the temptation in writing:—

सतानंद उपरोहित अपने तिरहुति-नाथ पठाए।
खेम कुसल रघुबीर-लषनकी ललित पत्रिका ल्याए॥

(*Bāla.* 102/3)

Redemption from the Stigma

Many a narrator has manoeuvred *bane and boon device* in order to expiate the characters from the blot of century.

Śaktibhadra in his '*Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi*' (900—1000) manipulated—

Anasūyā was immensely grieved to see Sītā devoid of ornaments at such a tender age. So the sage's wife, at the time of bidding her good-bye, blessed her—'In your husband's view, all the things attached to your body would appear very much like ornaments'—

सीता—(आत्मगतम्) किं णु खु ण जाणादि अज्जउत्तो णं महरिसिपदिणीए अणसूआए अस्समे मं विसज्जअन्तीए मए दिण्णं वरं तुह भत्तुणो दंसणपहे सव्वं मण्डणं भविस्सदित्ति।

(*Ibid* 2/ *after* 4)

Sadly enough, this boon played a havoc in times to come. Indeed, it was the root cause in preparing a ground for Sītā's ordeal.

After Rāma's victory over Rāvaṇa, Sītā repairs to meet her consort. But Rāma regards her reproachfully—(7/16); as the dust of the ground, while at sleep, converted into sandal dust stuck to her breast; and the fallen ripe leaves of the tree she used to sleep beneath in Lanka, turned into ornaments for her hair—

वसुधारजश्शयनकालसञ्चितं
स्तनमण्डले मलयजत्वमागतम्।
समपद्यताश्रयमहीरुहच्युतं
परिणामि पर्णमलकस्य भूषणम्॥

(*Ibid* 7/28)

Thus, our Lord gets expiated from the defame of the sternness He adopted at that time.

Saint Tulasī's Anasūyā also showers her affection on Sītā, and adorns her with heavenly raiments & ornaments—

रिषिपतिनी मन सुख अधिकाई। आसिष देइ निकट बैठाई॥
दिब्य बसन भूषन पहिराए। जे नित नूतन अमल सुहाए॥

(*Araṇya*. 5/2-3)

but this jewellery, or the ornaments decked on her on Vibhīṣaṇa's instructions in Lanka—

बहु प्रकार भूषन पहिराए। सिबिका रुचिर साजि पुनि ल्याए॥

(*Lanka*. 108/7)

are not instrumental in Rāma's suspecting Sītā's fidelity; or Tulasī's protecting his Lord from the rudeness. Tulasī plays upon another symphony for the purpose—

सीता प्रथम अनल महुँ राखी। प्रगट कीन्हि चह अंतर साखी॥
तेहि कारन करुनानिधि कहे कछुक दुर्बाद।

(*Lanka*. 108/14, 108)

Kṛttivāsa devised another trick to expiate Rāma from the stigma of '*Sītā's Ordeal*' & '*Sītā's Abandonment*'. He concocted the curses of Tārā and Mandodarī.

Tārā is dolefully agitated at her husband Bālī's killing. She cursed Rāma—

सीतारे आनिव घरे बहु परिश्रमे॥
× × ×
किन्तु सीता ना रहिवे सदा तव पाश॥

(*Ibid. Kiṣkindhā, P.* 178)

'Sītā, recovered after strenuous efforts would not be living with you forever.' Sītā is joyfully repairing to see her Lord. Mandodarī comes in and irascibly curses her—

तोमा लागि हइलाम आमि अनाथिनी॥
- -
आनन्दे चलेछ तुमि राम सम्भाषणे॥
ए आनन्दे निरानन्द हवे अकस्मात्।
विष दृष्टे तोमारे हेरिवे रघुनाथ॥

(*Kṛtti. Lankā, P.* 439)

'So, having left me a destitute, you are proceeding cheerfully to accompany Rāma. This jubilation of yours would suddenly become murky. Rāma would look at you with a venomous look.'

Now Rāma was redeemed from the blot of every kind. The callousness showed by Him was merely the work of these curses.

The Killing of Bālī and Agony of Rāma's heart:

Despite our unsullied reverence for Rāma, we seem to be a bit puzzled over the issue of His killing Bālī inly. We unspokenly condemn Rāma for this act—'Killing without a forewarning!' Though our Lord succeeds in propitiating us through His verbosity—

भ्रातुर्वर्तसि भार्यायां त्यक्त्वा धर्मं सनातनम्।

(*Vālmī. Kiṣk.* 18/18)

'You covet your brother's wife! Thus shunning the perpetual dogma!'

The renowned poet Śrī Bhaṭṭi in his '*Bhaṭṭimahākāvyam* or *Rāvaṇavadha,* (500—700) writes—

अहं तु शुश्रुवान् भ्रात्रा स्त्रियं भुक्तां कनीयसा।
उपेयिवाननूचानैर्निन्दितस्त्वं लता-मृग॥

(6/140)

In '*Ānandarāmāyaṇa*' (1400-1500) also, Rāma imputes Bālī in likewise manner—

......रामः प्राह वालिनं त्वं रुमायां लम्पटः सदा।
बन्धुभार्यां गृहेस्थाप्य बन्धुं हन्तुं त्वमिच्छसि।
दुर्वृत्तं त्वां समालोक्य मया तस्मान्निपातितः॥

(*Sārakāṇḍam*, 8/63-64)

Tulasī's Rāma rectifies the demur more presciently—

अनुजबधू भगिनी सुत नारी। सुनु सठ कन्या सम ए चारी।
इन्हहि कुदृष्टि बिलोकइ जोई। ताहि बधें कछु पाप न होई॥

(*Mānasa, Kiṣk.* 9/7-8)

Yet, without an advance warning, to attack on the back was against the rules of battle even in those days; hence Rāma is not completely exempted from the sin. That's why Dāmodara Miśra in his '*Hanumannāṭaka*' (Shri Venkateswar Press, Mumbai-4) cleanses the dross of Rāma's heart. Rāma is repentant—

रामः सकरुणं सविषादं च—

वत्स सौमित्रे गिरिगह्वरेषु स्वयोनिविहितं महत्सुखमनुभवन्तं महावीरं अनपराधिनं वालिनं हत्वा मन्दभाग्यः कथमहं जानकीसुखमनुभविष्यामीति शिरो धुन्वन्पौरन्दरिं व्याजहार..............

(5/55)

and when Bālī complains in a mild tone—'Could I not do the work (Sītā's discovery) which Sugrīva promised You to do?'

(*Ibid.* 56).

Rāma bursts into tears unobstructedly and clinches His own lot—

रामः सबाष्पम्—

शुद्धिर्भविष्यति पुरन्दरनन्दन त्वं
मामेव चेदहह पातकिनं शयानम्।
सौख्यार्थिनं निरपराधिनमाहनिष्य-
स्यस्मात्पुनर्जनकजाविरहोऽस्तु मा मे॥

(*Ibid.* 57)

'O' the son of Indra! When you kill me, an innocent sinner as I am, while asleep with an intent to eke out pleasure; then and only then I'll be purified at heart.'

Bālī feels convinced to the hilt. (See—tetrastich, 58; *Ibid*). Kṛttivāsa's Rāma bears the same loftiness of character. Commenting on this, Dr. Ambā Prasāda 'Suman' (Aligarh Uni.) writes in his—'*Tulasī-Kāvya-Cintana*'—

'Kṛttivāsa's Rāma is not contented with His killing of Bālī. He is contrite to have killed Bālī. It shows that Kṛttivāsa's Rāma has become more cognate on human ground, though basically He is *Brahma* Himself ' (P. 115).

In '*Ānandarāmāyaṇa*', too Rāma mitigates the anguish of Bālī's heart; but He is not that repentant—

यद्यपि त्वं दुराचारो निहतोऽसिरणे मया। तथापि भिल्लरूपेण द्वापरान्तेंऽघ्रिणं मम॥

(*Sārakāṇḍam*, 8/66)

Jaināċārya Raviṣeṇa fabricates quite a reverse theory, i.e., in his *Padmapurāṇa/Padmacarita,* he depicts Bālī as a recluse (*Parva*. 9/90). It is indeed another Vidyādhara, named Sāhasagati who teases Sugrīva by putting on his disguise (by dint of the witchcraft, namely Śemuṣī) (*Parva.* 10).

The rogue shuns his roguery and turns into his real form the moment he comes before Rāma (*Parva.* 47/117—120).

Thus, our Lord Rāma gets fully rid of the blame.

As a matter of fact, in Raviṣeṇa's *Padmapurāṇa*, the superhuman *Rāmāyaṇa*-episodes have been made look natural. Bālī and Sugrīva, therefore, are not identical brothers here. How could they be? As per the lore of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Bālī is Indra's son, and Sugrīva is the son of the Sun-god (*Vālm. Bāla.* 17/10). In the *Rāmacaritamānasa*, it seems to be ridiculous that even Tulasī's omniscient Rāma fails to differentiate between the two brothers—

एकरूप तुम्ह भ्राता दोऊ।तेहि भ्रम तें नहिं मारेउँ सोऊ॥

(*Mānasa*, *Kiṣk.* 8/5)

We have an innate rectification to such demurs in *Padmacarita.*

The delighted Pt. Daulat Rām's rendering of it (*Saṁvat* 1818) proved a precursor to Hindī-dialect.

How is Rāvaṇa Ten-headed:

Again, it appears not to be appealing to the logic that Rāvaṇa was really ten-headed. If so, how would he change his sides while in bed? Raviṣeṇa's *Padmapurāṇa* proves it on most logical grounds—

स्थूलस्वच्छेषु रत्नेषु नवान्यानि मुखानि यत्।
हारे दृष्टानि यातोऽसौ तद्दशाननसंज्ञिताम्॥

(*Parva.* 7/222)

When Rāvaṇa was still a toddler, he had dragged the necklace, studded with transparent gems and protected by a thousand large serpents, without difficulty. 'The big transparent gems studded in that necklace reflected nine faces more, besides the real one. Hence, the boy came to be known as '*Daśānana*' or the ten-headed.'

How is Vibhīṣaṇa a great devotee of Rāma, belonging to the rival group:

Vibhīṣaṇa discovers from the great sage Sāgara Buddhi that Daśaratha's son and Janaka's daughter would be instrumental in causing (-his brother-) Rāvaṇa's death (*Parva.* 23/25). Hence, he repairs to kill both the kings in order to nip the apprehension in the bud. Daśaratha and Janaka escape on premonition from Nārada; and the ministers seat their dummy on the throne. Thus, Vibhīṣaṇa mutilates their effigy only; but later feels contrite and sad (*Parva.* 23/66).

Probably, this is for the reason that Vibhīṣaṇa has been depicted as Rāma's untainted devout in most *Vaidika Rāmāyaṇas;* particularly in Tulasī's *Rāmacaritamānasa*—

तात कबहुँ मोहि जानि अनाथा। करिहहिं कृपा भानुकुलनाथा।
तामस तनु कछु साधन नाहीं। प्रीति न पद सरोज मन माहीं॥

(*Sundar.* 7/2-3)

नाथ दसानन कर मैं भ्राता। निसिचरबंस जनम सुरत्राता।
सहज पापप्रिय तामस देहा। जथा उलूकहि तम पर नेहा॥

(*Ibid*, 45/7-8)

In Vālmīki, Lakṣmaṇa, when heard of Rāma's expatriation, is highly indignant at father Daśaratha. In a smouldering anger, he bursts out before his brother—

प्रोत्साहितोऽयं कैकेय्या सन्तुष्टो यदि नः पिता।
अमित्रभूतो निःसङ्गं वध्यतां वध्यतामपि॥

(*Ayodh.* 21/12)

He is not peaceful of mind; and so let out his indignance—

हनिष्ये पितरं वृद्धं कैकेय्यासक्तमानसम्।
कृपणं च स्थितं बाल्ये वृद्धभावेन गर्हितम्॥

(*Ibid.* 19)

'Our father has lost discretion; as he is very much fond of Kaikeyī. Having been coiled by the snare of libidinousness in old age, he has elicited considerable vilification. I'll but kill such dotard a father.'

In '*Campūrāmāyaṇa*', Lakṣmaṇa is seen provoking Rāma—

कैकेयीपरिभूततातवचने नम्रो भवान्मा स्म भू-
त्किञ्चिन्मामकमार्य शौर्यजलधे नम्रं धनुर्वर्तताम्॥

(*Ayodh.* 29)

In '*Kaṁbarāmāyaṇa*' also, Lakṣmaṇa speaks out his heart while dismissing Sumantra. (*Taila-Nimajjana Patala*)

But in his '*Mānasa*', Tulasī negates such reproachful comments. Tulasī's Lakṣmaṇa blurts out or even mutters no word on this occasion. He is rather more enthusiastic to accompany his Lord Rāma—

बागुर बिषम तोराइ मनहुँ भाग मृगु भाग बस॥

(2, 75)

However, Tulasī's Lakṣmaṇa does make some poignant remarks while dismissing Sumantra; but is immediately prohibited by Rāma—

पुनि कछु लखन कही कटु बानी। प्रभु बरजे बड़ अनुचित जानी॥

(*Ayodh.* 96/4)

What were those cutting words? Tulasīdāsa refrains from mentioning. We can call it Tulasī's literary-penance (वाङ्मय तप).

In order to save Lakṣmaṇa from this predicament, Raviṣeṇa

finds out another device for 'exilement-episode'. In his '*Padmapurāṇa*', Rāma is not a banished son. He rather abdicates to gear up His step-mother (here Kaikeyā)'s attempt to dissuading Bharata from becoming a monk, (in line with his father intending to do so) (*Parva*. 31).

Bhavabhūti in his '*Mahāvīracaritam,*' and Murāri in his '*Anargharāghavam*' (both—Cowkhaṁbā Vidyābhavan, Vārāṇasī-1) ferreted out another technique to ward off Lakṣmaṇa from indulging in this enormity (-of criticizing parents). In both the aforesaid *Saṁskṛta* plays, the '*Rāma-Vanavāsa*' episode takes place just after the wedding-ceremony is over in Janakapura. In first (i.e., *Mahāvīracaritam*), Sūrpaṇakhā is dispatched to Mithilā impersonated as Mantharā (4/40-41); and in the second (e.g., *Anargharāghavam*), King Janaka reads out, of his own accord, the scroll delivered by Kaikeyī's maid-servant (4/66).

Now, in such a state, Lakṣmaṇa need not feel exasperated at father Daśaratha; and Mantharā (the hump-backed) also gets rid of her humiliation of centuries.

Yet in another work, Rājaśekhara (the famous author of '*Kāvya-Mīmāṁsā*') in his '*Bālarāmāyaṇa*' (*Caukhaṁbā.*) concocted quite a new anecdote to retrieve King Daśaratha and queen Kaikeyī.

In the aforesaid work, Daśaratha and Kaikeyī have left for Indra's quarter, to attend a ceremony there. And in their absence, Sūrpaṇakhā and Māyāmaya, instigated by Mālyavān, enact the '*drama*' of '*Rāma-Vanavāsa*' in impersonation of Kaikeyī and Daśaratha, through the usual 'boon-asking' story; and disappear. Rāma, placing the command over His head, sallies forth to the forest.

Afterwards, when Daśaratha & Kaikeyī return from Indra's, they are stunned to learn this gimmick. Vāmadeva tells him (Daśaratha) Rāma's saying so, "I most humbly obeyed it considering it as my father's order. Now, be it a Yakṣa; a demon; or even Daśaratha, the doyen of Raghu's race, I'll pass fourteen years comfortably in the forest; and then return to my city, well protected by Bharata."—

मया मूर्ध्नि प्रह्वे पितुरिति धृतं शासनमिदं
स यक्षो रक्षो वा भवतु भगवान् वा रघुपतिः।
निवर्तिष्ये सोऽहं भरतकृतरक्षां निजपुरीं
समाः सम्यङ्नीत्वा वनभुवि चतस्रश्च दश च॥

(6/16)

Thus, this act, proving King Daśaratha innocent, has been rightly put under appellation—'*Nirdoṣa Daśaratho*'.

In the 'Sītā's Abduction' episode, the Sītā of Vālmīki and others reviles Lakṣmaṇa, as she is desperately vexed to send the latter after Rāma to protect Him, to the extent that she even imputes him to be covetous for her—

लोभात्तु मत्कृते नूनं नानुगच्छसि राघवम्।

(*Vālm. Araṇ*. 45/7)

इच्छुः कामयितुं त्वं माम्, इत्यसौ जगदे तया।

(*Bhaṭṭi*. 5/59)

सीता—सुणाहि लक्खण! किं ण तुराअसि। हद्धि, अणन्तरगामिणी इत्थिआणं लच्छी। ण हु अहं। एक्कं तं एव्व।

(*Āścarya*. 3/before 29)

also, in '*Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa*' (*Araṇ*. 7/31—34) Lakṣmaṇa, naturally, replies petulantly—

धिक् त्वामद्य विनश्यन्तीं यन्मामेवं विशङ्कसे।

(*Vālm. Araṇ*. 45/32)

'Curse to you! You want to get ruined to-day; for you suspect my integrity this way. The Lakṣmaṇa of '*Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi*', too behaves in the 'tit for tat' manner—

तदुपस्थिता तव विपन्नियतं
परिवर्तते प्रकृतिरापदि हि॥

(3/29)

In '*Bhaṭṭikāvya*', Lakṣmaṇa curses Sītā—

निरगात् 'शत्रुहस्तं त्वं यास्यसीति शपन् वशी॥

(5/60)

To improve upon this 'character-assassination' dialogue, Saint Tulasīdāsa writes—

मरम बचन जब सीता बोला। हरि प्रेरित लछिमन मन डोला॥

(*Mānasa, Araṇ.* 28/5)

'What were those cutting words?' the devotees would hardly know. Tulasī avoided this whole gamut of 'battle of words'.

The author of *'Pratimānāṭakam'* (300-400), Bhāsa even manoeuvred to display this episode take place during the long absence of Lakṣmaṇa. By Rāma's order, Prince Lakṣmaṇa has long left to escort the Chancellor returning from his pilgrimage (Act 5, Sītā's speech after tetrastich 13).

Thus, the discerning poet has safeguarded Sītā's modesty; nay has saved both of them from falling in an awkward situation.

In most *Rāmakathā* works (except the *Saṁskṛta* Dramas—*'Prasannarāghava'* and *'Anargharāghava'* etc.) Paraśurāma arrives when the marriage-party is on its way back to Ayodhyā, having been bidden farewell from Janakapura. Therein, Lakṣmaṇa utters no word on this occasion. Even father Daśaratha's voice is subdued by the raving 'wielder of battle-axe' Moreover, Rāma-Paraśurāma have very curt dialogues.

But Tulasī portrays Paraśurāma enter exactly in the middle of congregation—

तेहिं अवसर सुनि सिवधनु भंगा। आयउ भृगुकुल कमल पतंगा॥

(*Bāla.* 268/2)

Indeed, Tulasī planned the whole episode of 'Bow-breaking' to give a boost to Rāma's prowess (Dr. Ramānāth); as well as Lakṣmaṇa's expressing his love of his Lord Rāma—

छुअत टूट रघुपतिहु न दोसू। मुनि बिनु काज करिअ कत रोसू॥

(*Ibid.* 272/3)

and so on. Rāma wins the heart of everyone through His beatific vision; and the display of His celestial power. Before the politeness and modesty of Tulasī's Rāma—

नाथ संभुधनु भंजनिहारा। होइहि कोउ एक दास तुम्हारा॥

(*Ibid.* 271/1)

× × ×

देव एकु गुनु धनुष हमारें। नव गुन परम पुनीत तुम्हारें॥

(*Ibid.* 282/7)

That embodiment of anger, Paraśurāma is spell-bound; and so forced to give in—

अनुचित बहुत कहेउँ अग्याता। छमहु छमामंदिर दोउ भ्राता॥

(*Ibid.* 285/6)

It must be deemed as the 'Self-gratifying-diastole' of the heart of 'the lore of the Lord of Raghus', on the part of Tulasī (Dr. Ambā Prasāda 'Sumana').

In most *Rāmakathā* books, Lakṣmaṇa gets hurt by the fearful lance hurled by Rāvaṇa—viz.,

Vālmīki—Yuddha., 100-101

Prasannarāghavam—7/28

Ānandarāmāyaṇa—Sārakāṇḍam, 11/38

Raviṣeṇa's *Padmapurāṇa—Parva* 62

Campūrāmāyaṇa—Yuddha, 49—51 and again *Śloka*, 79 also in Raṁganātha; but in Kālidāsa's '*Raghuvaṁśa*'(400-500) (12/77), so also in *Kaṁbarāmāyaṇa—Yuddha., Brahmāstra Paṭala*, it is Rāvaṇa's son Meghanāda who injures Lakṣmaṇa. Tulasī took fullest advantage of the change in order to even the balance of 'youth-power' on both sides—

रावन सुत निज मन अनुमाना। संकट भयउ हरिहि मम प्राना।
बीरघातिनी छाड़िसि साँगी। तेज पुंज लछिमन उर लागी॥

(*Laṅkā.*, 54/6-7)

Again, in most lays it is Lakṣmaṇa who comes forward to rescue Vibhīṣaṇa from the fearful lance of Rāvaṇa—

एतस्मिन्नन्तरे वीरो लक्ष्मणस्तं विभीषणम्।
प्राणसंशयमापन्नं तूर्णमभ्यवपद्यत॥

(*Vālm., Yuddha.* 100/24)

Bhaṭṭikāvya., 17/92—98

Padmacarita, 62/72—82

Prasannarāghavam, 7/27—28

but Tulasī, a great devout of Śrī Rāma as he is, presents Rāma endure the shock. Why? Simply to strengthen and straighten His Lord Rāma's love of His suppliants—

आवत देखि सक्ति अति घोरा। प्रनतारति भंजन पन मोरा॥
तुरत बिभीषन पाछें मेला। सन्मुख राम सहेउ सोइ सेला॥
(*Lanka*. 94/1-2)

When Sītā Killed Rāvaṇa

In the prologue of his *Rāmacaritamānasa*, Tulasīdāsa invokes Sītā too, and reverences Her as being 'responsible for the creation, sustenance and dissolution' of the cosmos—

उद्भवस्थितिसंहारकारिणीं क्लेशहारिणीम्।
(*Bāla*. Invocation, 5)

So, isn't it strange that we have no visible instance of Hers 'destructive-power' or so? Only, we see a sample of her nourishing capacity on the occasion of the wedding-ceremony—

जानी सियँ बरात पुर आई। कछु निज महिमा प्रगटि जनाई॥
हृदयँ सुमिरि सब सिद्धि बोलाईं। भूप पहुनई करन पठाईं॥
(*Bāla*. 306/7-8)

How helpless she feels in clutches of that wicked Rāvaṇa and cries in tender notes—

हा जग एक बीर रघुराया। केहिं अपराध बिसारेहु दाया॥
× × ×
हा लछिमन तुम्हार नहिं दोसा। सो फलु पायउँ कीन्हेउँ रोसा॥
× × ×
सीता कै बिलाप सुनि भारी। भए चराचर जीव दुखारी॥
(*Araṇ*. 29/1, 3, 6)

Also, in *Aśoka-Vāṭikā*, she is much vexed as to end her life—

तजौं देह करु बेगि उपाई। दुसह बिरहु अब नहिं सहि जाई॥
सुनहि बिनय मम बिटप असोका। सत्य नाम करु हरु मम सोका॥
(*Sundara*. 12/2,10)

Then, whence did our Goswāmījī take this idea of Sītā's omnipotence? Indeed, Tulasī borrowed this inkling from Vālmīki's another work—'*Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa* (Shri Venkateswara Press, Mumbai-4) (1300—1400). Actually when Tulasī, in his *Mānasa*, quotes Maharṣi Vālmīki extol Rāma's consort—

छं०—श्रुति सेतु पालक राम तुम्ह जगदीस माया जानकी।
जो सृजति जगु पालति हरति रुख पाइ कृपानिधान की॥

(*Ayodh.* 126)

He must have certainly gone through '*Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa*' too, for his claim of—

'छओ सास्त्र सब ग्रंथन को रस'

(*The Āratī Song*, 4)

As per the tale of '*Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa*', there was another Rāvaṇa, namely—*Sahasramukha-Rāvaṇa* or the thousand-headed, who ruled over in '*Puṣkaradwīpa*' or the Puṣkara Island.

(*Ibid*,17/36)

This thousand-headed monster was none but Rāvaṇa's elder brother. He was so powerful and valiant that our Rāma's valiance totally failed before his strength and He swooned in the *Puṣpaka Vimāna* (22/49-50).

Then Sītā awoke from Her reverie, wore a fearful appearance; and in no moment beheaded the thousand-headed Rāvaṇa (23/13-14). She played havoc in the battlefield; and would not be appeased until Brahmā revived Her Lord Rāma with a loving soft touch (24/26). Rāma Himself sings prayer in praise of Jānakī, addressing Her with thousand names (25).

Indeed, *Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa*, thus belongs to the 'Śākta cult', in which Sītā jī has been regarded as 'Primordial-*Śakti*.'

('*Hindū Dharmakośa*'—*Śāktamata,* Page 622-23)



अनुज बधू भगिनी सुत नारी। सुनु सठ कन्या सम ए चारी॥
इन्हहि कुदृष्टि बिलोकइ जोई। ताहि बधें कछु पाप न होई॥४॥

"Listen, O wretch: a younger brother's wife, a sister, a daughter-in-law and one's own daughter—these four are alike (one's own daughter). One would incur no sin by killing him who looks upon these with an evil eye."

—*Mānasa*

Origin of Rāmāyaṇa

—Bir Bahadur Singh

Rāma-Kathā is the theme of many *Rāmāyaṇas* in many languages and countries all over the world. It originates almost in all the 18 Vedic *Purāṇas* and also in the *Ṛgveda*. All these *Purāṇas* and four *Vedas* are known as *Ārṣa* Oral or Vedic. Nārada Muni was not fully satisfied with *Rāma-Kathās* in the Vedic *Purāṇas*. He picked up Vālmīki as a poet of his choice. He asked him to compose *Rāma-Kathā*. He was sure that Vālmīki had a real poetic talent and would compose *Rāma-Kathā* to his entire satisfaction.

Modern historians face many difficulties while reading the *Ārṣa* literature. First of all *Ārṣa* books are very lengthy covering a good portion of a library. Secondly modern historians do not accept God, gods, incarnations, rebirths, spirits and divinity as any historical fact. Even those who swear in the name of God reject such facts mentioned in the *Purāṇas*, the Bible or the Kurāna. Modern men glorify their technology and condemn supernatural facts as Myth, Fairy-tales and Mythology.

There is a third difficulty also. Most of the *Purāṇas* are like a gazetteer. When they were copied by the writers, they also incorporated certain uptodate events of the history at the time of copying the *Purāṇas*. Nearly all the *Purāṇas* were last copied during the reign of king Vikramāditya of Ujjain and Samudragupta and Candragupta Vikramāditya II of the Gupta period. The fourth difficulty is the repetition of certain famous Puranic names even in the Non-Vedic and Post-Vedic *Purāṇas*. For example, names of famous Vedic *Ṛṣis* appear all along since

the Vedic days right upto 300 B.C. It may be noted that names of many Vedic *Ṛṣis* were institutionlised for their respective schools of thought. These were often used by the generations of their taughts as *Gotra* and also proper names like Kauśika, Vasiṣtha, Bhardwāja, Gautama and Garga etc.

The final and the greatest difficulty is that the *Vedāṅga* or the *Vedic* calends is cyclic and not linear like the calends used by historians. Even the ancient Egyptian calend was cyclic with a cycle of 1460 years from Era to Era of 1460 years. But the *Vedāṅga* is not only cyclic. It is a concentric cycle of day, year, 12 years, 60 years, *Yuga*, *Mahāyuga*, *Kalpa* and *Kalpānta*. *Kalpa* is also called Eternity in the *Vedas* and *Purāṇas*. It covers a cycle of 4320 million years. This astronomical period defies the imagination of historians.

With all the above mentioned difficulties, it is better to follow linear calends accepted by the modern historians. The oldest one is the Hebrew Calend of the Jews tracing ancient history upto and before 5000 B.C. The second is the Yudhiṣṭhira *Saṁvat* of the king Yudhiṣṭhira since 3122 B.C. Then the *Kaliyugī Saṁvat* of the *Vedāṅga* since 3102 B.C. The *Vīra Saṁvat* of the Jainism started in 526 B.C. after the *Nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra. The Buddhist *Saṁvat* started in 523 B.C. after the *Nirvāṇa* of Buddha. This calend is popular in Sri Lanka also. The last one is the *Vikramī Saṁvat* of Vikramāditya started with its close link with the *Vedāṅga*, just as the Hebrew calend and Christian calend are linked with the suffixes B.C. and A.D. The *Vikramī Saṁvat* was started by Varāha Mihira in 57 B.C., when Vikramāditya was crowned.

It is confirmed by the Hebrew calend that Prophet Moses got the old Commandments sometimes before 1000 B.C. Advent of Prophet Noah preceded several generation before Prophet Moses. Noah' Ark or ship in which Prophet Noah took shelter must have been due to a geological upheaval in the Arabian Sea raising its bed. The same upheaval also caused the

submergence of Dwaraka Island, making the Runn (Battle Field) of Kutch marshy, raising the river bed of Saraswatī in Punjab, Hariyana and Western Rajasthan. The last or the 18th. Vedic *Purāṇa*, the *Śrīmad Bhāgawata Mahāpurāṇa*, also mentions these facts. It means that period of Noah's Ark and submergence of Dwaraka is the same. The Arabian Sea is common between Arabia and the Western India. Naturally the geological upheaval effected the coastal regions of Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Sindh and Gujarat till rising water of the sea was merged into the Indian Ocean.

With this background, the views of two great masters, Max Mueller and Lokamānya Tilaka, are most helpful. Max Mueller was learned Jew scholar, well-versed in every thing Hebrew, Biblical whether the Old Testament or the New Testament of Prophet Jesus. He devoted his entire life in the study of Sanskrit grammar, *Vedas*, *Purāṇas*, *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* like a committed student of *Ārṣa* literature. It is justified to call them Vedic *Ṛṣis*. Tilaka translated the *Gītā* in the best way like *Ādi Guru*, Śaṅkarācārya. He also explained the *Vedāṅga* without which it is not possible to understand the *Gītā*. The *Vedāṅga* explains Macro-cycle and Micro-cycle of the creation and universe. Tilaka also took the help of the *Manusmṛti*, the famous law book of the Vedic king Manu. This book was accepted by historians and the *Tajirate Hinda* of the Moghal and the British empires in india.

The *Manusmṛti* covers every aspect of civil administration, social order and calend also. Besides, the *Manvantara Era* of *Kalpa* was also named in his name. The present *Manvantara* is the seventh one, out of the 14 *Manvantaras* of a Kalpa. The *Manusmṛti* also fixes the life-spans of all the Trinity gods, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva in the ratio of Nx Kalpas, 2Nx Kalpas and 3Nx Kalpas respectively. 3Nx Kalpas is called *Mahākalpa* equal to the life-span of god Śiva. God Śiva is also called Mahādeva.

Max Mueller fixed the age of the oldest *Ṛgveda* at 4000 B. C. taking into account the Noah's Ark and the submergence

of Dwaraka Island respectively mentioned in the Old Testament and the *Śrīmad Bhāgawata Mahāpurāṇa*. The 17 *Ārṣa Purāṇas* and the *Ṛgveda* must have been composed at least 1000 years before the *Mahāpurāṇa*. Considering all these facts, it is clear that Max Mueller was on the safe-side of his estimate. Ever since then, it has been a mental exercise of the historians to fix the age of the *Ṛgveda* at any time between 4000 to 1000 B. C. If there had been no *Vīra Saṁvat* or the Buddhist *Saṁvat*, the historians could have also proved that the *Vedas* were imported from Germany and published in Ajmer in 1885.

King Manu was also the founder of the Solar Dynasty of Indian kings to which Rāma belonged. Considering the cyclic order of *Mahāyugas* in a *Kalpa* which are 72 in a *Kalpa*, the cycles of *Mahāyuga* comes to 14 X 72 or 1008 cycles. In every *Mahāyuga*, there is a *Tretā Yuga*. In every *Tretā Yuga* Rāma is born. The last incarnation in the present *Mahāyuga* is his 504th incarnation. This point has been fully clarified by the Vālmīki and the *Tulasīkṛta Rāmāyaṇas*.

(The *Rāmayāṇas* say—"Once in a *Tretāyuga*, goddess) Pārvatī expressed her doubt to god Śiva if Rāma was an incarnation of god Viṣṇu. Rāma was searching for Sītā desperately. If he was really a god, he should know that Sītā had been kidnapped by Rāvaṇa. For a god like Viṣṇu, it was surely easy for him to punish Rāvaṇa and recover Sītā. But he is desperate like a man, not knowing what to do. God Śiva told her that in his holiest seventh incarnation, Rāma is acting like an ideal man in the various worldly situations.

That doubt of goddess Pārvatī occurred only once in an incarnation of god Viṣṇu and not in all the incarnations as Rāma, the seventh holiest one. Vālmīki or Tulasīdāsa only mention the doubt of Pārvatī. But goddess Pārvatī also went further to clarify her doubt. This clarification does not occur in the *Rāmāyaṇas* composed by them. According to a *Paurāṇika* story, Pārvatī transformed herself into Sītā and went to *Daṇḍaka Vana*

to find out if Rāma recognises her as Sītā. The moment Rāma saw her, he saluted her and enquired—"Mother, why are you roaming here alone? Where is Father?" Rāma recognised her as Pārvatī and not as Sītā, inspite of her transformation as Sītā. This incident occurs only once in the life of god Śiva. Life span of god Śiva is longer than Viṣṇu as per the *Manusmṛti*. It is also confirmed by the fact that Pārvatī committed Satī, because god Śiva refused to accept her as his consort after that incident. Thus Pārvatī ventured to verify her doubt only once in a *Kalpānta*. She committed *Satī* only once to be reborn as Pārvatī in the next *Mahāyuga* and to marry god Śiva again.

In this connection, it is recalled that according to the *Śiva Purāṇa*, the Trinity gods, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva are brothers, born of the same mother, Gaurī, eternal virgin. Virgins in Sanskrit are called *Kanyā*. Goddess Gaurī is eternal virgin or *Kanyā*. The southern tip of India was named in her name as *Kanyā Kumārī* to emphasise the word *Kanyā* with the word *Kumārī*, not married. In Sanskrit, *Kumārī* means unmarried. Although Gaurī was virgin, but she had to marry god Śiva as his virgin consort. Thus full name of god Śiva is Īśwara Gaurī Śaṅkara Pārvatī, because god Śiva is highest god in the Vedic theology.

Another historical fact to support the estimate of Max Mueller is the history of 24 *Tīrthaṅkars* and the *Ahiṁsā Paramo Dharmaḥ*.

Max Mueller and Lokamanya Tilak collected a lot of information from the *Mahābhārata* and the *Gītā*. The *Mahābhārata* is the encyclopaedia of entire *Ārṣa* literature including the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* also. The *Gītā* is the key to the *Vedas*, *Purāṇas* and *Upaniṣads*. First of all, facts in the *Mahābhārata* may be examined. But why was *Ahiṁsā* accepted as a *Dharma* and not as a *Paramodharmaḥ* as proclaimed by Ṛṣabhadeva Jī? Then why *Hiṁsā* was supported as a necessary evil by the greatest poet, Veda Vyāsa who had also composed the *Mahābhārata*? As per *Paramo Dharmaḥ*,

Ahiṁsā becomes the greatest and supreme *Dharma* and *Hiṁsā* becomes the worst sin. The facts are below.

After the *Mahābhārata* war, Yudhiṣṭhira became the king of Hastinapur. About ten years after, he performed the *Aśwamedha Yajña* and started the *Yudhiṣṭhira Saṁvat* mentioned by some astrologers. After that he crowned Parīkṣit, the grandson of Arjuna as king and he went to the Himalayas in search of salvation with his brothers and Draupadī, their joint Queen. King Parīkṣit was condemned to die of a snake-bite. He invited Śukadeva who recited the *Śrimad Bhāgawata Mahāpurāṇa* for his salvation. This *Mahāpurāṇa* is also the history of the *Yādava* Dynasty. Parīkṣit was most pleased with the *Mahāpurāṇa* and asked Veda Vyāsa to Compose a history of the Lunar Dynasty founded by King Purūravā to which Hastinapur kings belonged. In that sense the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* is the history of the Solar Dynasty of king Manu to which Rāma belonged.

As condemned, Parīksit died of a snake-bite after a week and his son, Janmejaya was crowned as a king. Veda Vyāsa composed the *Mahābhārata* during the reign of Janmejaya. Janmejaya felt that *Hiṁsā* or Killing in that war was not justified. Veda Vyāsa composed the *Gītā* as a supplement to justify the *Mahābhārata* war as a necessary evil.

According to the Vedic *Purāṇas*, Śrī Śukadeva Jī was the son of Veda Vyāsa. He had composed the *Mahāpurāṇa* before the *Mahābhārata* Epic. Secondly, Veda Vyāsa had written the *Ārṣa* literature of Oral *Vedas* and *Purāṇas* including the 18th *Mahāpurāṇa* itself. In fact Veda Vyāsa was the first editor and compiler of the 4 *Vedas* and 18 *Purāṇas*. He was the writer and compiler of them in book form. This fact has been clearly mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* by Veda Vyāsa himself. Besides, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Gītā* are not accepted as *Ārṣa* books by orthodox Brahmins.

One thing must be examined about the history of '*Ahiṁsā Paramo Dharmaḥ*' with reference to the first *Tīrthaṅkara*

Ṛṣabhadeva Jī, the *Śrīmad Bhāgawata Mahāpurāṇa*, Śrī Śukadeva Jī and Pārśvanātha, the 23rd. *Tīrthaṅkara*. The first ten books of the *Mahāpurāṇa* glorify God. Its last two books become critical of God, Divinity and Omnipotency of God. This criticism of God as Ranachora Jī, Jhule Lāla and Cheddi etc., in the Prākṛta language of Rajasthan, Sindh and Gujarat appears after the Runn (Battle) of Kutch, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, the both, could not control the drunk *Yādava* troops nor the rebellion of Kolas, Kirātas, Bhīlas and Gujjars of Gujaraṭ.

The word *Tīrthaṅkara* is also Prākṛta. In Sanskrit, it means *Tīrthayātrī*. In the *Śrīmad Bhāgawata Mahāpurāṇa*, he is mentioned as a *Tīrthayātrī Muni* with occult power. He met with some of the drunk *Yādava* youths. One of them was acting like a pregnant girl before Ṛṣabhadeva. He warned those drunk youths that they may perish if they fight amongst them. According to the *Mahābhārata*, Queen Gāndhārī had cursed Śrī Kṛṣṇa that Dwaraka shall meet the same fate as Indraprastha. Any way, soon after the Battle of Kutch, the great flood came. It means that Ṛṣabhadeva Jī had proclaimed *Ahiṁsā Paramo Dharmaḥ* in Gujarat sometimes in 3137 B.C. Tree of 24 *Tīrthaṅkaras* is not dynastic, but titular. For example, Mahāvīra beloged to Nāga dynasty of Bihar and Bengal. But Pārśvanātha was a *Kṣatriya* of Varanasi. According to historians, he was contemporary to king Solomon of Israel. All these facts prove that Noah, Ṛṣhabhadeva Jī, Veda Vyāsa, Śrī Śukadeva Jī and the *Mahābhārata* war were contemporary.

But any thesis in support of God and *Ahiṁsā* or any antithesis against them can be understood correctly with reference to the *Gītā* only. No other book can do it. Every book supports a thesis and condemns its antithesis more or less. This is because man alone is free in the creation to act in anyway he likes. Whatever may be the will of God, man himself chooses to be a saint or a scoundrel. Of course his actions are like seeds and reactions are their fruits under doctrine of *Karma*. It means—"Reap

the harvest of what you sow." If man does a good or a bad act, he has to get the Same in a larger number.

At present, modern man accepts the Macro-cycles of universe and creation. It was explained by another Hebrew. Albert Einstein, like a perfect Vedantist. But he did not explain the Micro-cycles of universe and creation. The *Gītā* explains the both. Once Lakṣmaṇa also expressed his doubt to Rāma. "How is it possible that an entire *Kalpa* can pass in a single *Muhūrta*?" Rāma asked him to have a bath and take a dip. During the time taken by him in the dip, he became a Nāga King and the entire Nāga Dynasty of kings passed with himself as Nāga King. After his dip, Lakṣmaṇa was surprised that Rāma was still sitting on the bank of the river Saryū. Rāma smiled and asked him to hurry up to the palace. Lakṣmaṇa found that their mothers were awaiting for them as usual for the mid-day meal, as if there has been nothing unusual to Lakṣmaṇa.

According to the *Ṛgveda*, God is *Kāla*, *Akāla*, *Kalpānta* and also *Mahākāla*, *Just* as He is *Ākāra Sākāra*, *Nirākāra* and also *Nirvikalpa*. Just as God is hidden in every thing, He is also hidden in every moment. Man may accept or reject it. Man may believe it or may not. It matters nothing to God, creation and universe. It only matters to the individual according to his words, thoughts and deeds as the doctrine of *Karma* holds.



तपसा चीयते ब्रह्म ततोऽन्नमभिजायते।
अन्नात्प्राणो मनः सत्यं लोकाः कर्मसु चामृतम्॥

"Through knowledge *Brahman* increases in size. From that is born food (the Unmanifested). From food evolves *Prāṇa* (*Hiraṇyagarbha*); (thence the cosmic) mind; (thence) the five elements; (thence) the worlds; (thence) the immortality that is in *Karmas*."

—*Muṇḍakopaniṣad* (I. 1.8)

The Banishment of Sītā

—Keshavram N. Iengar

The Hindu Faith has often been blamed for not providing an ascetic order for women, like Buddhism and Christianity do, wherein, they could dedicate themselves to the service of fellow human beings and earn the favour of Heaven—salvation through service. But Hindu *Dharma* goes to the source of the problem by providing the most suitable inauguration for a soul on its journey through life, by being born of women who are assured the highest honour and protection in society. This society prescribed regulations for the utmost biological and moral purity of its women, by the exaltation of motherhood and by the impeccable standards of chastity. By taking care in advance of the ethico-biological background of the family, many problems of health and psychological imbalances are avoided.

There are opportunities enough within a Hindu family for women to practise all modes of sacrifice and dedication. It is often equal in its rigour to an ascetic life, without being exposed to its dangers. The authors of the *Dharmaśāstras* were clearly aware of all the subtle weaknesses which the flesh was heir to and of the differences in the constitutions of men and women.

The merit that a *Brāhmaṇa* earns by spirt of renunciation and scholarship, a *Kṣatriya* from death in battle, a *Vaiśya* from charity and the care of cows, and a *Śūdra* by devotion and labour for his master, a Hindu woman earns by love and ministration to her husband and nurture of her family. This is the spiritual means *(Sādhanā)* and sacrifice *(Yajña)* supreme for every Hindu woman.

Man's extremity is God's opportunity. For imputing motives to Lakṣmaṇa, Sītā had to suffer the ordeal of ten months at Lanka. For casting aspersions on the spotless character of Bharata, a true devotee, she had to court the severest chastisement for a woman—banishment from her husband's hearth. With these trials, the single faltering in Sītā's conduct namely her harsh words to Lakṣmaṇa spoken on an alien impulse, was set aright. That small dent of human failing, inevitable for being cast in a mortal coil, was repaired and she was made perfect, even as her incorruptible Divine Essence.

Just as the supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ, his Crucifixion, redeems and opens to Salvation all the souls that lived before His nativity and all the souls that shall come after Him, to the end of the World, this supreme sacrifice of Sītā, her Banishment from a society that had already begun to show signs of a growing corruption, redeems and purifies all the women that lived before her advent, and all the women that are born after her. Through woman the holy vessel, the progeny that shall be born of her are likewise purified.

There is no word of complaint against Rāma, no hysterical wailing and swearing unto Heaven, but the silent tears that were shed by Sītā at her exile, traverse our land to this day and cleanse the hearts of all faithful women. We could no more wish her Banishment nor to have been, than Christians could wish there was no Crucifixion of their Saviour.

Śrī Rāma's reign was to demonstrate the application *(Ācaraṇa)* of *Dharma* in a man's life and not to insist on his rights as a son, king or husband. If the standards of Rāma's conduct were superlative, those of Sītā were even greater. It was to proclaim the glory of Sītā that all the events in the *Rāmāyaṇa* seem to be ordained. The rightness or otherwise of Rāma's action in sending away Sītā, becomes merely incidental in the light of the Greater Truth that is Sītā's life *(Sītāyāścaritaṁ mahat)*. But for the ideal of Sītā's life which Hindu women have cherished

all these centuries, Hindu *Dharma* could never have been sustained in our country till now.

The first prayer of a Hindu on rising from bed is to beg forgiveness for treading on the body of Mother Earth. And men in this country had for long been known to walk gently on the Earth. It is from the boundless forbearance and innocence of the Earth that Sītā is born and it is to the Earth that she returns when her purity is vindicated. But man, product of the Earth yet divorced from his parent by pursuing the promptings of his runaway reason, continues to debate the subject of Sītā's Banishment, not seeing that it is *he* who banishes Sītā, not Rāmā. It is this "*every-man*" in us that must hang his head in shame for his feeble faith in himself.

The issue was not that Sītā's chastity was suspect—she is always and everywhere the embodiment of purity—but that her suffering was once more necessary to point out that man with his doubting mind, that delights in defamations, will not be convinced "even if one rose from the dead"! The Fire-ordeal at Lanka had convinced all the gods and animals.

Sītā is the power and wealth of the Earth. She belongs by virtue *(Dharma)* to the Sun God Rāma, with whom she is ever united. Rāvaṇa who represents our tenfold egoism, tried to arrogate that power and wealth to himself and met his doom. Hanumān stands for the unsullied human mind, as swift and expansive as the wind. He does not know his own power, but when he is dedicated "in service" to the Lord (Śiva), uniting Him with the Divine Mother (Śakti), he attains immortality.

सधर्मचारिणी मे त्वं प्राणेभ्योऽपि गरीयसी।

(*Vāl. R.* III. 10.21)

"By pursuing the path of *Dharma,* you are dearer to me than life itself" declares Rāma to Sītā when she questions Him about His severity towards the Rākṣasas. Rāma does not go back on His word; not even in jest or hyperbole does Rāma make a promise which He does not keep.

अप्यहं जीवितं जह्यां त्वां वा सीते सलक्ष्मणाम्।

(*Ibid.* III. 10.18)

"I may yield up my life or even thee, O Sītā, as well as Lakṣmaṇa."

Events so turn out that He has to banish both Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, in each case, at the call of a higher *Duty* and for the redemption of His word. It is the same *Dharma* in a severer form that separates the Divine Pair in the *Uttarakāṇḍa*. Indeed, the spirit of Rāma has departed with Sītā on her banishment. But He holds on to life, as it were, in order to let that glorious lady fulfil her charge as the mother of His illustrious sons and depart as a *Sumaṅgaḷī,* what every Hindu woman prays for.

We are born in another's pain and die in our own. The story of Śrī Rāma which was born from the pain of Vālmīki at seeing one of a pair of birds separated from its loved one, ends likewise on a note of pain and sadness, of the amalgamating pain that we share with Śrī Rāma on Sītā's exit from this mortal world. But it is that necessary and joyous pain from which we die to this world to be reborn into the Life Eternal, in the kingdom of Sītā-Rāma.



स्वगृह्योक्तप्रकारेण द्विजत्वं प्राप्य मानवः।
सकाशात्सद्गुरोर्मन्त्रं लब्ध्वा मद्भक्तिसंयुतः॥
तेन सन्दर्शितविधिर्मामेवाराधयेत्सुधीः।
हृदये वानले वार्चेत्प्रतिमादौ विभावसौ॥

"After the necessary sacraments like sacred thread initiating ceremony according to their own *Gṛhyasūtra,* and becoming a twice born officially, should get initiation from a learned *Guru,* well furnished with My devotion following the path shown by the *Guru,* should worship Me. This worship they should make either in their hearts or in the fire or in the sun-god."

—(*A.R. Kiṣ.* 4. 12-13)

Little Known Rāmāyaṇas

—S. Rajalakshmi

Rāmāyaṇa, the immortal poem of Vālmīki has gained such a world wide popularity, that Lord Brahmā has rightly predicted—

यावत्स्थास्यन्ति गिरयस्सरितश्च महीतले।
तावद्रामायणकथा लोकेषु प्रचरिष्यति॥

The story of *Rāmāyaṇa* will be current in the world, as long as mountains and rivers exist on the earth.

There are several literary works in Sanskrit based on the story of *Rāmāyaṇa*. But there are a lot of unknown rare poems on *Rāmāyaṇa;* most of them are still in manuscript form. Here is a list of some rare unknown minor *Rāmāyaṇas* which may be helpful for *Rāmāyaṇa* scholars as well as Sanskrit scholars.

Maṅgalaśloka Rāmāyaṇa—

Here in, each verse while narrating the story of Rāma, ends with the word *Maṅgala* wishing benedictions to Rāma.

Kaṅkaṇabandha Rāmāyaṇa—

This is a beautiful poem describing the important events in the life of Rāma. The verses are musical and beautiful, keeping high standard of language. The letters contained in each stanza may be arranged in a circular diagram, representing *Kaṅkaṇa* or bangle and hence the title *Kaṅkaṇabandharāmāyaṇa.* The author is Kṛṣṇamūrti.

Vedapāda Rāmāyaṇam—

Here, the verses are composed in such a form that the fourth line of each verse contains a quotation from the *Vedas.* The author of this work is one Rāmānuja, son of Varadarāja.

Gāyatrī Rāmāyaṇam—

It is explained herein, how the 24 stanzas of the *Gāyatrī Rāmāyaṇa,* which begin with each of the 24 successive letters of the *Gāyatrī Mantra,* indicate and thus bring out the significance of the *Gāyatrī Mantra.*

Āryā Rāmāyaṇam—

A poem on *Rāmāyaṇa* composed in *Āryā* metre. The author is Paṇḍitasūrya.

Kriyāgopana Rāmāyaṇam—

This work is ascribed to Kṛṣṇakavi. In each verse, the predicate, *(Kriyā)* appears in a disguised form *(Gopanam).* This poem is otherwise known as *Candrakalāvilāsaḥ.*

Āsecanaka. Rāmāyaṇam—

This is a valuable poem composed by Subramaṇyasūri. This renders Rāma's story in *Āryā* metre in 470 verses.The first three *Pādas* of each verse narrate the story and the fourth *Pāda* gives the moral suggested in the three lines. These verses cover all the major incidents of *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.* This work is also known as *Rāmāyaṇāryā.*

Ciranjīvi Rāmāyaṇam—

This is a short treatise on *Rāmāyaṇa,* narrated in five stanzas. The author of this work is not known.

Tattva Saṅgraha Rāmāyaṇam—

This is a rare composition of unknown authorship on *Rāmāyaṇa.* Apart from the regular story of *Rāmāyaṇa,* many additional incidents and legends are also found.

Mūla Rāmāyaṇam.

Ānanda Rāmāyaṇam—

These two works give importance to Āñjaneya and are more popular among Mādhvas.

Adbhutottara Rāmāyaṇa—

This is attributed to Vālmīki and runs to 27 cantos. In the end Sītā vanquishes Rāvaṇa.

Vasiṣṭhottara Rāmāyaṇam—

This is otherwise known as Sītā Vijayam, which contains 12 chapters. Here also, in the 12th chapter, Sītā vanquishes Rāvaṇa, the hundred-headed.'

Vasiṣṭha Rāmāyaṇam—Yogavāsiṣṭha Mahā Rāmāyaṇa—

This *Rāmāyaṇa* mainly treats of *Yoga* and philosophy alongwith the story of Rāma. Apart from the above mentioned work, there are many more titles such as *Mṛkaṇḍu Rāmāyaṇam, Saṅgraha Rāmāyaṇam, Vyāsa Rāmāyaṇam, Kākabhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇam, Nāṭaka Rāmāyaṇam, Vibhīṣaṇa Rāmāyaṇam, Brahmā Rāmāyaṇam, Śiva Rāmāyaṇam, Āgasti Rāmāyaṇam, Śeṣa Rāmāyaṇam, Āgama Rāmāyaṇam, Karma Rāmāyaṇam, Skanda Rāmāyaṇam, Pulastya Rāmāyaṇam. Aruṇa Rāmāyaṇam, Bharata Rāmāyaṇam, Dharma Rāmāyaṇam, Kalyāṇa Rāmāyaṇam, Sannīti Rāmāyaṇam, Saptaślokī Rāmāyaṇam, Śitikaṇṭha Rāmāyaṇam, Ekaślokī Rāmāyaṇam.*



बिगत काम मम नाम परायन। सांति बिरति बिनती मुदितायन॥
सीतलता सरलता मयत्री। द्विज पद प्रीति धर्म जनयत्री॥ ३॥
ए सब लच्छन बसहिं जासु उर। जानेहु तात संत संतत फुर॥
सम दम नियम नीति नहिं डोलहिं। परुष बचन कबहूँ नहिं बोलहिं॥ ४॥

"Having no interested motive of their own they are devoted to My Name and are abodes of tranquility, dispassion, humility and good humour. Again, know him for all time, dear brother, a genuine saint, whose heart is a home of all such noble qualities as placidity, guilelessness, friendliness and devotion to the feet of the Brahmans, which is the fountain of all virtues. They never swerve from the control of their mind and senses, religious observances and correct behaviour and never utter a harsh word."

—*Mānasa*

The Significance of Rāmāyaṇa

—*N. S. Pandya*

Rāmāyaṇa is the story of Rāma, the great hero and ideal man, who ruled in the *Tretā Yuga.* The story is narrated by sage Vālmīki, who was a great seer. A seer is a person who has developed the capability of seeing mentally without recourse to the—faculties of external perception—the ability to become conscious of and visualise absolute truths in the depths of the soul. *Rāmāyaṇa* is an allegory—a story full of symbolism and mystic significance. Proper study and understanding of the symbolism and mystic significance of *Rāmāyaṇa* can lead one to establish a link with higher levels of consciousness and attainment of a super-conscious state.

Rāmāyaṇa with its poetic beauty, describes the trials and tribulations of Rāma in his early life and later his marathon struggle to eradicate the evil terrorizing the earth in the form of Rāvaṇa. Rāma was born in the solar race of kings, which was founded by Ikṣwāku, the son of Manu Vaivaswata who in turn was the son of Vivaswān—the Sun.

Rāma is the seventh *Avatāra,* the incarnation of the Supreme Deity Viṣṇu, who descends upon the earth and manifests Himself through his inscrutable power of *Māyā* to protect the righteous, to destroy the wicked and to re-establish *Dharma*—the rule of Law, religious and moral merit and virtue.

Rāvaṇa was the son of Viśravas and grandson of Prajāpati Pulastya. He was the king of *Rākṣasas* who were enemies of gods. They used to disturb holy sacrifices and harass devoted men engaged in religious and other peaceful persuits. Rāvaṇa

propitiated Brahmā and was granted the boon of being invulnerable against gods and demons.

The battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa can be symbolically construed as the conflict between good and evil culminating in the struggle to achieve supremacy over supernatural power and control of terrestrail nature.

Viewing from a different angle, it can be seen as the everlasting struggle between the lower levels of human mind and the supra-cosmic mind. The human mind having realised and accepted the presence of divine forces waiting to find expression from within himself, tries to break free from the bondage and limitations imposed by his ignorance *(Māyā)* and rises to subliminal heights.

In the true tradition of an epic, *Rāmāyaṇa* narrates in magnificent symbolism and classical allegory the strivings of man, surrounded by forces of evil, circumscribed by the bounds of mis-conceptions and self-imposed ignorance, in uplifting his soul and achieving his spiritual aspirations.

Rāmāyaṇa also explicitly demonstrates the fact that intellect and knowledge wrongly applied by unscrupulous persons *(Rāvaṇa)* for personal aggrandisement and evil selfish purposes wrecks havoc with the evolutionary efforts of Nature in its operation on human race. On the other hand benign persons inclined towards altruistic humanitarian purposes will use these powers for the upliftment of not only their own selves but the humanity in general. A person lacking in self-consciousness can be equated to one having no moral—compulsion, to a brute, to an *Asura* in human form. It may, however, be pertinent to remember that these depraved, witless men, without any sense of moral and social obligations are also subject to an internal conflict of the two faced principles of Good and Evil, always present within all human beings. Since humanity as a whole is on its upward evolutionary path, such persons passing through a number of cycles of birth and death, gaining a little

enlightenment in each cycle, learning the lesson the hard way, are bound to gradually turn round towards higher values of life and ultimate salvation in accordance with the unvarying operation of the law of *Karma.*

The evolutionary forces operating both at physical and material levels are limited by the dominating factor of time available to an individual for the fruition of the effects of the operation of such forces. Since one life-time of an individual is not sufficient, it becomes logically inevitable for the process to continue in subsequent births.

With the rise and fall of human races their culture, their civilization and technological achievements, all being subject to the laws of cyclic operation, are liable to periodic destruction and regeneration. This may be so, but there is a continuity of the immortal inheritance of knowledge gained by the soul which constantly maintains its progress towards higher principles and more sublime powers. With the rise of each new race, the essence of spiritual progress though dormant for a while emerges again and again and new heights of spiritual upliftment are scaled.

The *Avatāra* incarnations mark the stages and turning points in the evolutionary process. The indomitable human spirit throws up a great personality who emerges as the saviour of mankind, leaving his indeliable marks on the heart and soul of man for ages to come.

Such is the story of Rāma which has been beautifully condensed in the following verse—

आदौ राम तपोवनादि गमनं हत्वा मृगं कांचनं
वैदेहीहरणं जटायुमरणं सुग्रीवसंभाषणम्।
वालीनिग्रहणं समुद्रतरणं लंकापुरीदाहनं
पश्चाद् रावणकुंभकर्णहननं एतद्धि रामायणम्॥



Śrī Rāma as Seen by King Bhoja

—Dr. P. R. K. Sarma

The story of Śrī Rāma, popularly known as *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa* composed by Śrī Vālmīki—a seer and a poet par excellence, has been very famous and held in high esteem among all strata of Indians for several millennia. Both the poet and the poem have become immortal. Probably, no poet in India has ever thought himself blessed without writing about Rāma as evidenced by Śrī Murārī's famous verse in the *Anargharāghava* which runs as follows—

यदि क्षुण्णं पूर्वैरिति जहति रामस्य चरितं
गुणैरेतावद्भिर्जगति पुनरन्यो जयति कः?
स्वमात्मानं तत्तद्गुणगरिमगम्भीरमधुरं
स्फुरद्वाग्ब्रह्माणः कथमुपकरिष्यन्ति कवयः?

(If poets leave out Rāma's story on the plea that it was a beaten track by earlier ones, who is there in the world pre-eminent like Rāma endowed with such great qualities? Or how else can the poets, despite the fact that their supreme compositions vibrant with dignified, profound and sweet poetic qualities, favour themselves?).

Among such blessed poets, King Bhoja occupies a very prominent place. He is a great scholar, poet, seer, critic, and devotee, all rolled into one. His famous *Campū Rāmāyaṇa* is unique in many respects. Especially the supreme divinity of Śrī Rāma, depicted in a suggestive way in the *Rāmāyaṇa* by Vālmīki, is expressly described in a most captivating style couched in sweet alliterative words. Thus the devotee in Bhoja has imbibed the true spirit of Vālmīki. But the King modestly declines in the

Campū Rāmāyaṇa that he would, somehow, satisfy the learned scholars with small bits of glory sung by Vālmīki—

वाल्मीकिगीतरघुपुङ्गवकीर्तिलेशैः
तृप्तिं करोमि कथमप्यधुना बुधानाम्।...

Now, the writer will try to make a sincere attempt to show the soul-elevating and profoundly devotional sentiments of the great King as found in the *Campū Rāmāyaṇa*.

First, he pays glowing tributes to the first poet—Vālmīki, in the following manner—

"..........मधुमयभणितीनां मार्गदर्शी महर्षिः"

(The *Maharṣi* is the Master guide to the poets of mellifluous words). Being tortured by the atrocious acts of Rāvaṇa, Indra and other gods led by Lord Brahmā, approached Lord Viṣṇu lying on the serpent bed in the milky ocean and make an appeal to his mercy. In this connection, the poet makes a fascinating description of the sleeping posture of the Lord in an altruistically unique manner—

.......आतन्वानं भुजगशयने काऽमापे क्षौमगौरे।
निद्रामुद्रां निखिलजगतीरक्षणे जागरूकाम्॥

(......The Lord, on the serpent-bed white like a silken cloth, assuming a unique sleeping posture quite awake to the protection of the entire universe)

Here, the poet, as a great seer, reveals the power of the Lord's invisible force, which is beyond the pale of all human intelligence and so mistaken as non existing by the ignorant, as the only prop of the entire universe.

Bhoja describes the Lord's descent in the human world in an awe-inspiring fashion—

....मेध्यादयोध्यारणेः ।
....आविर्भूतमभूतपूर्वमपरं यत्किंचिदेकं महः॥

He compares, here, the city of Ayodhya with *"Araṇi"* a piece of wood of *Śamī* tree used for producing sacred fire by attrition and Lord Rāma with the unique Supreme fire possessing

unprecedented glory. Both the comparisons are quite significant and relevant to the context.

While describing Rāma, following Viśwāmitra, at the behest of his father, the author of the *Campū Rāmāyaṇa,* vividly brings out the characteristics of Śrī Rāma both as a dutiful son and as the Almighty supreme spirit, that may be realised by *Yogins* in their deep meditation—

"योगेन लभ्यो यः पुंसां संसारापेतचेतसाम्।
नियोगेन पितुः सोऽयं रामः कौशिकमन्वगात्॥"

The poet, here indirectly admits the extra-ordinary fortune of King Daśaratha, a mere house-holder, who has the unique privilege of instructing the Supreme Being as his humble son.

Through Paraśurāma's defeat resulting from his own encounter with Śrī Rāma, the poet has given a good lesson to the world—

"नूनं जनेन पुरुषे महति प्रयुक्त
मागः परं तदनुरूपफलं प्रसूते।
कृत्वा रघूद्वहगतौ क्षणमन्तरायं
यद्भार्गवः परगतेर्विहतिं प्रपेदे॥"

(The offence committed against a great personality recoils on the offender and produces a result suitable to the offence: Bhārgava Rāma, having made an obstacle for a moment in the movement of Śrī Rāma, was deprived of his final beatitude).

King Bhoja, who is always conscious of Rāma's divinity, uses every important event in the *Rāmāyaṇa* to help his readers follow his example. Therefore, when Daśaratha has proposed to make Rāma, the sole protector of the three Worlds, the King of a small Kosala Kingdom, the poet compares this proposition with making the Mount Meru, the support of the whole World, as a pillar to bear the burden of his own small house—

"अथ दशरथः पुत्रं रामं स्वतस्त्रिजगत्पतिं
स्वविषयमहीमात्रे कर्तुं पतिं विदधे मतिम्।
भुवनभरणे कल्यं कल्याणभूधरमादरात्
स्वगृहपटलीधुर्यस्तम्भं विधातुमना इव॥"

Likewise, the poet says that Rāma, taking his Mother's (Kaikeyī's) command on his head like a garland, has gone to forest in order to protect the worlds—

"मातुराज्ञां वहन् मूर्ध्ना मालामिव महायशाः।
वनाय रामो वव्राज जगतामवनाय च॥"

Here, the purpose of the Lord's incarnation is expressly indicated.

On seeing Rāma donning bark garment, Vasiṣṭha slightly closed his eyes with grief. Even this pathetic scene has not escaped the devoted attention of the poet. Here, he says—

सवल्कले दाशरथौ विषादादामीलिताक्षो यदभूद्वसिष्ठः।
तदेव जातं करणं महर्षेः काकुत्स्थयाथार्थ्यविलोकितस्य॥

(The very fact that Vasiṣṭha, on seeing Rāma wearing bark garments, slightly closed his eyes with grief, has become a means for his realisation of Rāma's real [supreme] state).

Also the poet says—

"अस्य पीताम्बरत्यागे किं जाता विक्रिया पुरा।
इति प्रत्यग्दृशां श्रेष्ठो वसिष्ठो नातिविव्यथे॥"

(Was he previously disturbed while throwing away his yellow garments? thus thinking, Vasiṣṭha, the best of the Ṛṣis, was not much grieved)

Although, King Bhoja is a great devotee of Śrī Rāma to the core, his sense of divinity is not bereft of human touch. In the following verse, we find a happy blend of divinity and human sentiment—

"दृष्ट्वा राममनेकजन्मरचितैर्दृश्यं शुभैः कर्मभिः
श्रुत्वा मातृवरद्वयादुपनतां वृत्तिं च वैखानसीम्।
अत्युज्जृम्भितहर्षशोकजनितै बाष्पैर्निषादाधिपः
शीताशीतगुणान्वितैरविरलैः संपृक्तवक्त्रोऽभवत्॥"

Having looked at Rāma, whose mere sight is made possible only b means of virtuous acts performed in several previous births and having heard of his ascetic life acquired on account of his Mother's two boons, Guha, the hunter-chief, has his eyes

filled with streaming tears of joy and grief that are hot and cold respectively.

In the honest opinion of the writer of this article the poet himself, through the medium of Guha, has expressed his joy and grief.

Like Potana, who wrote the *Āndhra Mahā Bhāgavata*—a free and yet faithful translation of Śrī Vyāsa's Sanskṛt *Bhāgavata* into Telugu—King Bhoja is a great devotee. We clearly perceive Potana's personality, marked with devotional fervour, in all devotional verses of various devotees like Prahlāda and Dhruva. In fact, some times, he outweighs those great *Bhaktas*. In the same manner, Bhoja's ecstatic moods of devotion are clearly discernible almost throughout the *Campū Rāmāyaṇa*.

Bhoja often says that Rāma cannot be seen by those who did not perform virtuous acts in their previous lives—a fact reverently admitted by devotees.

Bharata enjoys, alongwith his retinue, sumptuous and tasty feast coveted even by gods, at the hermitage of Bharadwāja. But, to him the real feast is the very sight of Śrī Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa on the Chitrakuta Mountain. Here, the poet describes the trio in glowing terms. King Bhoja stands before our very eyes in the garb of Bharata in a supplicatory mood with folded hands—

(१) "अथावासं शान्तेरकृतसुकृतानामसुलभ···ददर्श·····सीतासहचरम्"

(२) "ततस्तस्योपान्ते···ववन्दे वैदेहीं···"

(३) "स्वतस्सिद्धं यस्मिन्·····रामानुजपद·····तमपि साक्षादकृत सः"

After prolonged entreaties, Bharata, the best of profiteers, obtained a pair of very costly crowns in the form of Rāma's Sandals, implying that the ordinary crown worn by Kings is not only worthless but also worrisome whereas the former grants the wearer supreme bliss with no stigma attached to it. This idea is sweetly conveyed in the following verse—

"भरतस्तदनुप्रार्थ्य लेभे लाभविदां वरः।
काकुत्स्थपादुकाकारं महार्घं मकुटद्वयम्॥"

Perhaps, King Bhoja might be very secretly cherishing in his mind the wonderful fortune of Bharata.

After Sītā's abduction by Rāvaṇa, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, searched for her but could not succeed in their search. Then they wailed pitiably and lost their fortitude. Here, the poet not only gives a graphic description of Rāma's melancholy mood but also goes to the extent of blaming the first poet, Vālmīki, as hard-hearted for narrating such a pathetic story in his own words—

"......तादृग्विधामपि कथां कथयन् स्ववाचा।
वल्मीकजन्ममुनिरेव कठोरचेताः॥"

The poet admires the unique fortune of Jaṭāyu, the vulture King, for receiving the libations mixed with Rāma's tears that could not be obtained even by Daśaratha.

In the *Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍa,* the poet makes even the stone cry with a vivid description of forlorn Tārā, lamenting over the loss of her husband, Vāli. He makes her, in this connection blame, even Śrī Rāma who remains quite silent.

Since *Sundara Kāṇḍa* is replete with the heroic deeds of Hanumān, we find indirect references to Rāma.

The Sun has become blessed since his son, Sugrīva helped Śrī Rāma search Sītā. So, Moon also, with a view to making himself blessed has acted as a light on the path of Hanumān, the messenger of Rāma, searching for Sītā's location.

Seeing Sītā's ears pierced and bruised with the thunder like harsh words of Rāvaṇa, Hanumān repeated sweet *Rāma-nāma;* which served as a sore-healing, soothing balm, and made him a confidant to her—

देव्या दशाननवचोमयवज्रदीर्ण
कर्णान्तरव्रणविरोपणभेषजानि ।
विस्त्रम्भणार्थमयमन्वयसङ्गतानि
रामाभिकीर्तनमधूनि शनैर्न्यषिञ्चत् ॥"

This verse is worth remembering, especially for the votaries of *Rāmanāma* as it helps them cross the ocean of *Saṁsāra*

without any difficulty or pitfall.

The *Campū Rāmāyaṇa* written by King Bhoja, is now available to us, unfortunately, upto the *Sundarakāṇḍa* only. But, later, the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* was completed by an equally great poet, namely, Śrī Lakṣmaṇa Sūri.

As the writer wants to make this article concise, he has not taken up the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* for critical appreciation. He humbly submits that, if this article evokes any interest in the minds of its readers to make a detailed study of Bhoja's *Campū Rāmāyaṇa,* he feels he is amply rewarded.



अहङ्कारादिसम्बन्धो यावद्देहेन्द्रियैः सह।
संसारस्तावदेव स्यादात्मनस्त्वविवेकिनः॥
मिथ्यारोपितसंसारो न स्वयं विनिवर्तते।
विषयान्ध्यायमानस्य स्वप्ने मिथ्यागमो यथा॥

"So long as the identification (I am the body or it is my body) continues till then the *Saṁsāra* appears to be very real to the persons incapable of discriminating Self from Non-Self. This world has been superimposed falsely yet without the dawn of the real knowledge it does not go away by itself. It is like the dream stage in which a person visualises so many objects which He used to contemplate previously."

—(*A.R. Kiṣ.* 3. 18-19)

मनोमयः प्राणशरीरो भारूपः सत्यसङ्कल्प आकाशात्मा सर्वकर्मा सर्वकामः सर्वगन्धः सर्वरसः सर्वमिदमभ्यात्तोऽवाक्यनादरः॥

"(He) appears like the mind, has *Prāṇa* as the body, has the form of consciousness, is of true resolves, is of the nature like space, is the performer of all actions, is possessed of all good desires, is possessed of all good smells, is possessed of all good essences, pervades all this, is devoid of speech, is free from hankering."

—*Chāndogyopaniṣad* (III. 14.2)

Niṣāda and Śabarī Episode

—Shastri Harijivan

Lord Rāma took birth on this earth for various purposes. First and formost, He wanted to establish a model code of conduct by His own character. Secondly He intended to kill evil doers (असुरा:) and rescue the saints from their torture and tyranny. Thirdly, He meant to initiate a welfare state where no citizen suffered from any type of want or unhappiness. However, the most outstanding aim of His descent on earth was the emancipation of the primitive and aboriginal class of people.

He was ordained to renounce the throne and leave Ayodhya to lead a forest life in order to comply with king Daśaratha's promise to queen Kaikeyī. He left the people of Ayodhya lamenting and came to Shringwerpur. The *Niṣāda* king Guha received Him alongwith Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa. He said—"I welcome you. This whole earth is yours. You are our Master. Please accept my royal dishes and best beds."

Overwhelmed by these loving words from *Niṣāda,* Rāma cast both His arms around his waist and embraced him closely. Inquiring about his health, He said—"Friend, as I adopted life of a hermit, I will take fruits and roots only."

Both Rāma and Sītā slept on the grass and Lakṣmaṇa kept vigil by keeping awake the whole night. He did not relent to the entreaties from *Niṣāda* to rest on the comfortable bed.

The next day while crossing over the river Gaṅgā, Rāma allowed the aboriginal chieftain to wash His feet, out of exceeding sympathy and love for the lower sections of society.

Śabarī Episode—

After Sītā's kidnapping by Rāvaṇa, Rāma came to the hermitage of Mātaṅga *Ṛṣi* searching for Sītā. The hermitage was covered with various kinds of trees, laden with sweet fruits and flowers around. Śabarī, a disciple of Mātaṅga, lived there. When she came to know of Rāma's arrival, she rushed towards Him and lay prostrate before Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in devotion. Then the aged lady ascetic (Śabarī) said—"I am blessed by your vision. Whatever deeds I have performed so far, have been splendidly rewarded today. The service, which I rendered to my preceptor, has yielded the long-cherished success in the form of your holy vision, which was promised by him at the time of his departure.

"O God! Since then I have waited and waited for your arrival and collected the berry fruits everyday from the forest lying round the *Paṁpā Sarovara* (a holy lake). "Now take these berry fruits." Saying so, she put the fruit before God. Convinced of devotional affection on her part, both Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa began to eat. But Lakṣmaṇa hesitated to consume the stuff when he saw teeth-mark on the surface of berries, made by Śabarī, because she wanted to check the sweetness of each single berry which was to be taken by none other than the Lord Himself! Rāma, who knew this, had no compunction in munching them morsel by morsel. After all, Śabarī's emotional identity and immaculate intimacy with the super-soul had far enriched the taste of the barries served by her. Since the rich have monopoly over money, wealth, and power, they can afford to serve expensive delicacies to the Almighty. But what they sorely miss is the emotional integration and spiritual identity with the Divine, and it is not a market commodity which can be bought for a price. It has to be cultivated within with single minded devotion of a Śabarī or a Vidura. What the God needs is the richness of emotion and never the richness of earthly material.

The supreme soul Swāmināyaṇa also enjoyed to work

among the lower strata of society. He was so much absorbed in the uplift and emancipation of the downtrodden and depressed category of people that He was nick-named 'अधमोद्धारक'. For this very reason some took Him to be shoe maker. If Rāma enjoyed companionship with 'निषाद' king Guha and relished of Śabarī's half-bitten berries, the super spirit Swāmināràyaṇa enjoyed poor Jīvana Bhakta's loaf of *Motha* (a kind of pulse in Jetalpur (Gujarat) and made night halt in the hut of Saghrāma who belonged to *Vāghrī* community. This historical involvement of Swāminārāyaṇa among the rustic and rural populace like *Bhīlas, Kolis, Kathis, Harijanas* etc., earned Him the title of a social reformer during His life time. Why, He transformed, this class of people to such an extent that a murderous robber like Jobanpagi with sword in hand, turned a devout devotee overnight chanting the *Mantra* of Swāminārāyaṇa holding a rosery in that very hand, which blandished the sword and cut asunder many a mortal within the wink of an eye.



राजा कर्ता च गोप्ता च सर्वस्य जगतः पिता । राजा कालो युगं चैव राजा सर्वमिदं जगत्॥
धारणाद् धर्ममित्याहुर्धर्मेण विधृताः प्रजाः । यस्माद् धारयते सर्वं त्रैलोक्यं सचराचरम्॥
धारणाद् विद्विषां चैव धर्मेणारञ्जयन् प्रजाः । तस्माद् धारणमित्युक्तं स धर्म इति निश्चयः॥

"The king is the creator, protector and father of the entire world. The king is the time (sets the trend of the times) and the '*Yuga*' (a particular age of the world). The king is the whole world. They call it '*Dharma*', for it sustains (from '*Dhṛ*' to hold) (the world). The created beings are sustained by '*Dharma*'. Since it supports the three worlds together with all the movable and immovable things. He sustains (even) his enemies, puts them on the right path and delights his subjects by '*Dharma*'. Therefore he (his rule) is known as '*Dharma*'. This act of '*Dhāraṇa*' or sustaining is '*Dharma*'—this is the conclusion."

(*V. R.*)

Āditya Worship by Rāma in Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa

—Dr. Shashi Tiwari

The sun has attracted the attention of mankind for adoration and worship from the very beginning of human history. It has attained the position of pre-eminence among the deities of nature in ancient times. The prominence, beauty and splendour of solar orb, its importance in the creation and maintenance of life, its primal role in the cosmic evolution had secured for the sun a special place in Indian religious thoughts. The Vedic religion consisted of prayers and sacrifices. It recognised many gods, almost all being idealisations of natural phenomena. In Vedic hymns sun has been praised under various forms and names as Sūrya, Savitṛ, Mitra, Viṣṇu, Pūṣan, Āditya, Rohita, Vivasvat etc. Sun-worship of Vedic Aryans is mainly based on a spiritual background. In the *Ṛgveda* Savitṛ is the divine object of meditation. In the *Upaniṣads* the sun is regarded as the best manifestation of the supreme power.

In the epic period the religion of Indians was purely Vedic. In the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* the Vedic tradition of sun-worship is maintained with some changes and developments. Śrī Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira were well versed in the *Vedas* and they worshipped the sun-god. Both the epics inform about the ways of sun-worship, and its popularity in the period of their composition. In the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* we find many references of sun-worship. For the first time there is a specific reference to a sun-sect known as *Sauras* in the *Mahābhārata.* There are many descriptions in the epics which tend to show the glory and prominence of the sun-god during that period.

In the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* the parents of Śravaṇakumāra are described as performers of *Sandhyopāsanā* i.e., invocation of the Savitṛ god in the morning and evening (II. 64.33). Again Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā are mentioned as invoking Savitṛ in a proper way (II. 87. 19). Some *Ṛṣis* are also mentioned as performing *Sandhyā* with their hands raised upward.

In the *Araṇyakāṇḍa* Rāma while searching for Sītā here and there asks Āditya about Sītā and describes Him as the witness of all, that takes place on the earth and of every good or bad act—

आदित्य भो लोककृताकृतज्ञ
लोकस्य सत्यानृतकर्मसाक्षिन्।
मम प्रिया सा क्व गता हृता वा
शंसस्व मे शोकहतस्य सर्वम्॥

(63. 16)

In the *Sundara Kāṇḍa* Hanumān pays homage to Sūrya, Mahendra, Pavana and Brahmā with joined palms, before he leaves for Lanka—

स सूर्याय महेन्द्राय पवनाय स्वयम्भुवे।
भूतेभ्यश्चाञ्जलिं कृत्वा चकार गमने मतिम्॥

(I. 8)

Again in the same *Kāṇḍa,* the Sun-god is respectfully remembered by Hanumān alongwith other gods namely Varuṇa, Indra, Soma, Marut and the twin Aśvins (13. 67).

In the *Rāmāyaṇa's Yuddha Kāṇḍa* we find, one whole canto in the praise of Āditya. That part of epic is popularly known as *Ādityahṛdaya Stotra* (6. 105). In some editions of *Rāmāyaṇa* it is numbered 106 or 107. Dr. Suśīla Kumāra De opines that this portion is a later addition, but by the style and language it seems to be a genuine part of original *Rāmāyaṇa.* According to the *Kaṭaka Ṭīkā* of this prayer sage Agastya is its seer, Āditya-Hṛdaya Bhūta, Bhagavān Brahmā is its deity and victory is its purpose. In the introduction of this *Stotra,* it is mentioned that before going to fight, with Rāvaṇa, *Ṛṣi* Agastya has advised

Śrī Rāma to worship the sun-god. Agastya tells Rāma that "this is the old secret by which thou will conquer all the foes in the battle. It is a holy prayer which destroys all enemies, gives victory, removes all sins, sorrows and distress, increases life and is the blessing of all blessings. Having daily repeated the *Ādityahṛdaya*, worship the rising sun, who is respected by both gods and demons, who gives light to all bodies and is the rich lord of all the worlds.

राम राम महाबाहो शृणु गुह्यं सनातनम्।
येन सर्वानरीन् वत्स समरे विजयिष्यसे॥
आदित्यहृदयं पुण्यं सर्वशत्रुविनाशनम्।
जयावहं जपं नित्यमक्षयं परमं शिवम्॥
सर्वमङ्गलमाङ्गल्यं सर्वपापप्रणाशनम्।
चिंताशोकप्रशमनमायुर्वर्धनमुत्तमम्॥
रश्मिमन्तं समुद्यन्तं देवासुरनमस्कृतम्।
पूजयस्व विवस्वन्तं भास्करं भुवनेश्वरम्॥

(VI. 105. 3—6)

In the *Ādityahṛdaya Stotra,* Āditya is identical with Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Skanda, Prajāpati, Mahendra, Dhanada, Kāla, Yama, Soma, Varuṇa etc. He has several names. In these names few are the well known names of other deities, some are Vedic names for the sun-god and others are the epithets or adjectives which show his virtues, actions or nature. Griffith's translation of eight verses runs thus—

He Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva the
Each person of the glorious three,
Is every God whose praise we tell
The king of Heaven, the Lord of Hell;
Each God revered from times of old
The Lord of war, the king of God.
Mahendra, Time and Death is he
The Moon, the Ruler of the Sea.
He hears our praise in every form.

The Manes, Gods who ride the storm,
The Aśvins, Manu they who stand
Round Indra and the Sādhya's land
He is the air and life and fire,
The universal source and sire;
He brings the seasons at his call
Creator, light and nurse of all.
His heavenly course he joys to run
Maker of Day, the golden sun;
The steeds that whirl his car are seven
The flaming steeds that flash through heaven.
Lord of the sky, the conqueror parts
The clouds of night with glistening darts.
He, master of the *Vedas* lore,
Commands the clouds, collected store:
He is the rivers' surest friend;
He bids the rains, and they descend
Stars, planets, constellations own
Their monarch of the golden throne.
Lord of twelve forms, to thee I bow,
Most glorious king of heaven art thou.

The verses are—

एष ब्रह्मा च विष्णुश्च शिवः स्कन्दः प्रजापतिः।
महेन्द्रो धनदः कालो यमः सोमो ह्यपां पतिः॥
पितरो वसवः साध्या अश्विनौ मरुतो मनुः।
वायुर्वह्निः प्रजाः प्राण ऋतुकर्ता प्रभाकरः॥
आदित्यः सविता सूर्यः खगः पूषा गभस्तिमान्।
सुवर्णसदृशो भानुर्हिरण्यरेता दिवाकरः॥
हरिदश्वः सहस्रार्चिः सप्तसप्तिर्मरीचिमान्।
तिमिरोन्मथनः शम्भुस्त्वष्टा मार्तण्डकोंऽशुमान्॥
हिरण्यगर्भः शिशिरस्तपनोऽहस्करो रविः।
अग्निगर्भोऽदितेः पुत्रः शङ्खः शिशिरनाशनः॥

व्योमनाथस्तमोभेदी ऋग्यजुः सामपारगः।
घनवृष्टिरपां मित्रो विन्ध्यवीथीप्लवंगमः॥
आतपी मण्डली मृत्युः पिङ्गलः सर्वतापनः।
कविर्विश्वो महातेजा रक्तः सर्वभवोद्भवः॥
नक्षत्रग्रहताराणामधिपो विश्वभावनः।
तेजसामपि तेजस्वी द्वादशात्मन् नमोऽस्तु ते॥

(VI. 105. 8—15)

Āditya is praised as a Lord of day *(Dinādhipati)*, victory *(Jaya)*, powerful *(Vīra)* and fast walker *(Sāraṅga)*. He helps to blossom the lotus flower *(Padma-Prabodha)*. Sūrya destroys darkness, ignorance, cold and enemies. He is Lord of all lights and kills the persons who are ungrateful.

तमोघ्नाय हिमघ्नाय शत्रुघ्नायामितात्मने।
कृतघ्नघ्नाय देवाय ज्योतिषां पतये नमः॥

(VI. 105. 20)

In this hymn Sūrya is praised as a Lord of universe *(Jagatpati)* and is identified with all the great gods in the typical sectarian fashion. He is the Lord of even Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa. He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of all creatures.

ब्रह्मेशानाच्युतेशाय सूरायादित्यवर्चसे।
नाशयत्येष वै भूतं तदेव सृजति प्रभुः।
पायत्येष तपत्येष वर्षत्येष गभस्तिभिः॥

(VI. 105. 19, 22)

This aspect is expressed by his few names as *Sarvabhavodbhava, Viśvabhāvana, Devadeva, Hiraṇyaretā, Hiraṇyagarbha, Ṛgyajuḥsāmapāragaḥ* etc., found in the *Ādityahṛdaya* hymn.

The worship of Sun as time is Vedic in origin, but its development under the impact of astronomical advancement is a theme of the epics and the *Purāṇas*. Here in *Rāmāyaṇa* his Lordship of the planets is also indicative of his role as the maker of time.

नक्षत्रग्रहताराणामधिपः।

(VI. 105. 15)

In spite of the fact that Sūrya Deva is a life giving god full of benevolent qualities, his malevolent side has not been forgotten in this hymn. It is mentioned that he is the destroyer of the universe. His names like *Mṛtyu, Sarvatāpana* are indicative of this aspect. Śrī Rāma has praised Sūrya as a great moral and ethical force also, when he ascribes him the beholder of good and bad deeds of men in *Araṇyakāṇḍa* (63. 16).

In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* we find some important hints about the method of Sun-worship. In many ways Vedic tradition is maintained here, but certainly with some new elements. At several occasions it is said in the epics that the Sun is to be worshipped by means of *Japa* of hymns sacred to him. Śrī Rāma invokes Āditya by the *Japa* of *Ādityahṛdaya* hymn after *Ācamana*. The concentration and purity of mind, before the recitation of hymn is considered essential.

आदित्यं प्रेक्ष्य जप्त्वेदं परं हर्षमवाप्तवान्।
त्रिराचम्य शुचिर्भूत्वा धनुरादाय वीर्यवान्॥

(VI. 105. 29)

Pleased with the incantation of prayer and the worship Āditya appeared before Rāma in the end and blessed him (105. 31).

In the *Rāmāyaṇa,* there is a class of Sun-worshippers which is referred to as worshipping Sūrya as *Ūrdhvabāhus.*

आदित्यमुपतिष्ठन्ते नियमादूर्ध्वबाहवः।
एते परे विशालाक्षि मुनयः संशितव्रताः॥

(II. 95. 7)

Accordingly some *Ṛṣis* facing the rising sun invoke and above Āditya with arms unstretched, a ritual called *Upasthāna.* There are frequent references to the performance of *Sandhyā* in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Particular stress is laid on performing the rite at the appointed time. Viśvāmitra is often found urging Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, who accompanied him to his hermitage, to perform *Sandhyā* in time (I. 23. 2,3). Its main feature is adoring Āditya with offerings of water and hummings of *Gāyatrī.*

Worship of gods was a common feature of the religious life of Indian people in *Rāmāyaṇa* age. But Āditya-worship performed by Rāma proves his supremacy among all the deities adored at that time. It also reflects the advancement of Sun-worship towards sectarianism, as the *Ādityahṛdaya* hymn extoles the sun-god to supreme height and establishes him as *Brahman.* By the worship of Āditya Rāma was successful in killing Rāvaṇa and winning the battle. From the above description the inference should be drawn that Āditya-worship in *Rāmāyaṇa* by Rāma was solely based on Vedic thought, but it was enriched by certain indigenous epic traditions also.



नीलोत्पलदलश्यामः पीतवासाश्चतुर्भुजः।
जलजारुणनेत्रान्तः स्फुरत्कुण्डलमण्डितः॥
सहस्रार्कप्रतीकाशः किरीटी कुञ्चितात्मकः।
शङ्खचक्रगदापद्मवनमालाविराजितः॥
अनुग्रहाख्यहृत्स्थेन्दुसूचकस्मितचन्द्रिकः।
करुणारससम्पूर्णविशालोत्पललोचनः।
श्रीवत्सहारकेयूरनूपुरादिविभूषणः॥

"Dark complexion like blue lotus-petals, yellow garment, four-armed; in this way the over Lord of the Universe, Supreme Self and the eternal Lord Rāma. Beautiful eyes like red lotus, ear-rings dazzling in the ear lobes; bright with the brightness of a myriad suns; diadem on the head; beautiful curly locks; conch, discus, mace and lotus in his four hands; a beautiful garland of white flowers bedecking the neck, the charming smile like moon-light on the lips which always indicated his graceful mercy, whose eyes were big like lotus flowers, full of compassion; *Śrīvatsa* on the chest, necklace, *Keyūra* and *Nūpura* on different limbs."

—(*A.R. Bāl.*3.16-18)

Rāma as Depicted by Kālidāsa

—*Dr. V. Meenakshi*

In the *Raghuvaṁśa Mahākāvya,* Kālidāsa describes the life of Rāma, from his birth to his ascending the heavens, in 552 verses distributed in five beautiful cantos. Kālidāsa has drawn upon the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki and the main events in Rāma's life have been narrated in the same sequence as in the *Ādikāvya,* without any significant changes. Kālidāsa gives a very charming explanation to the name 'Rāma' when he says that it signifies the foremost auspicious thing on earth.

राम इत्यभिरामेण वपुषा तस्य चोदितः।
नामधेयं गुरुश्चक्रे जगत्प्रथममङ्गलम्॥

(*R.V.* 10.67)

Kālidāsa was tempted to narrate the merits of Rāma, fascinated as he was by the extraordinary virtues of Rāma as sung by the *Ādikavi* Vālmīki. The *Raghuvaṁśa* narrates that in the heavens, when the gods were harassed by Paulastya, they approached god Viṣṇu for redress who promised them that he will be born as Rāma, the son of Daśaratha and annihilate Rāvaṇa.

सोऽहं दाशरथिर्भूत्वा रणभूमेर्बलिक्षमम्।
करिष्यामि शरैस्तीक्ष्णैस्तच्छिरः कमलोच्चयम्॥

(*R.V.* 10-44)

Many good happenings greeted the birth of Rāma and his brothers in the earth. The divine drums sounded from above and the mortal world became pure and equalled the heaven in splendour.

निर्दोषमभवत्सर्वमाविष्कृतगुणं जगत्।
अन्वगादिव हि स्वर्गो गां गतं पुरुषोत्तमम्॥

(*R.V.* 10-72)

Rāma's charming appearance gave immense joy to the people of Ayodhya. Rāma possessed a great sense of devotion to his father, and a great attachment to his brother Lakṣmaṇa. He was so broadminded that he did not entertain any hard feelings towards Kaikeyī, who caused his banishment to the Daṇḍaka forest. Rāma was an ideal match for Sītā, the worthy daughter of king Janaka. Rāma's blissful life in the company of Sītā, his mighty endeavours to discover her when she was carried away by Rāvaṇa, His self reproach when he had to abandon Sītā to wipe out the infamy attached to His illustrious dynasty, His strict adherence to monogamy and His performances of many religious sacrifices with the statue of Sītā beside Him, and finally His unfathomable sorrow at the final disappearance of Sītā, speak volumes of His great love and esteem for her.

Rāma had many remarkable virtues like politeness, firmness, fortitude and equanimity of mind. He was a dutiful king who attached great value to the opinion of his subjects. He revealed His political acumen when he allied with Sugrīva and granted asylum to Vibhīṣaṇa. He was a mighty warrior who vanquished the *Rākṣasa* king Rāvaṇa in a ferocious battle. Rāma was a great king who ruled gloriously and redressed the grievances of his people.

Though Rāma has been referred to as an incarnation of Viṣṇu in the *Raghuvaṁśa,* yet the delineation of his character is predominantly like that of any other human being with all the attendant joys and sorrows, trials and tribulations.



दो०—स्वामि सखा पितु मातु गुर जिन्ह के सब तुम्ह तात।
मन मंदिर तिन्ह कें बसहु सीय सहित दोउ भ्रात॥ १३०॥

"Nay, those to whom, my dear, You are at once master and companion, father and mother, preceptor and everything else—it is in the temple of their mind that Sītā and You two brothers should reside."

—*Mānasa*

Śrī Rāma as Supreme Godhead in Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa

—Lallan Prasad Vyas

There has been a general impression about *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*—the origin of the story of Śrī Rāma—that it projects him as great human personality which became more a history as the great poet was also a contemporary of his unparalleled hero. On the other hand, it is also believed that Śrī Rāma has been projected in *Rāmāyaṇa* of Goswāmī Tulasī Dāsa as an incarnation of supreme God. With these two impressions, a conclusion has been drawn that Śrī Rāma in human form could better inspire human beings than in the form of God incarnated as the God is to be worshipped and not to be followed. There is no denying the fact that the underlying message of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* speaks of Śrī Rāma as a great idealist and still a greater human personality who translated his idealism and principles into actions in day to day life—thus serving an all-time example of truth i.e., an embodiment of *Dharma "Rāmo Vigrahavān Dharmaḥ"*. In spite of this great message of his *Rāmāyaṇa,* sage Vālmīki reminds the readers on several occasions who Śrī Rāma was—the Almighty God himself. Therefore, separation of his divinity from his great humanism is not at all needed—as the two intermingled and entwined make them one and the whole entity-the personality of greatest of the great Śrī Rāma.

On intellectual plane one may think that he or she has nothing to do with the divinity or godhead of Śrī Rāma and inspiration to be taken from his ideal deeds is more than enough. Though it sounds well and even convincing but the most important message of *Rāmāyaṇa* is far beyond. When there is

an incarnation of God, it has a specific mission or purpose of its own to teach others through his ideal deeds what God expects from human beings. He sets human example at the level of the highest peaks of the lofty Himalayas to expect others to climb them as high as they can. But the human being is by and large weak by nature and lacks courage and therefore can not climb such heights on his own, takes help from God, necessary divine power by praying and surrendering. And it surely works provided there is sincerety and genuineness based on simplicity of heart. Impossible becomes possible. Here divinity becomes relevant when a person—a devotee, conscious of his limits needs the help and protection of the limitless.

That is the reason why Vālmīki as well as Tulasī Dāsa depict Rāma as God Almighty and also as a great human idealist. This is also a purpose of divine incarnation where the greatest of the great human beings cannot be separated from his original eternal element i.e., the Godhead. One inspires and other provides necessary strength to fulfil it. In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* many events and also the various gods speak dozens of times the supreme Godhead of Śrī Rāma whereas Saint Tulasī Dāsa in addition to it, himself reminds hundreds of times about the Supreme divinity of his Supreme Master. It would not be out of context to mention that Vālmīki of *Tretā Yuga* himself incarnated in the form of Tulasī Dāsa to sing *Rāmakathā* again with the aim of washing off the sins of the wicked persons in *Kaliyuga*. This truth was first revealed by an accomplished saint Nābhā Dāsa, also a contemporary of saint Tulasī Dāsa, in his immortal volume *Bhaktamāla* in which many undisclosed stories, mystries and miracles dealing with divine attainments of various saints including Tulasī Dāsa, have been made known for the first time.

The divine hint in the beginning—

Infact, *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* is full of the divinity of Śrī Rāma from beginning to end. A couple of lines of the very first *Śloka*

of *Rāmāyaṇa Māhātmya* (Spiritual significance) makes amply clear about the supreme godhead of Śrī Rāma when it says:—

रामेण प्रतिहन्यते कलिमलं रामाय कार्यं नमः।
रामात् त्रस्यति कालभीमभुजगो रामस्य सर्वं वशे॥

"Rāma destroyes all the vices of *Kaliyuga* therefore we should salute Him. Even most fierce snake of death also remains fearful of Rāma."

The third *Śloka* also supports the truth by saying:—

ब्रह्माविष्णुमहेशाद्या यस्यांशा लोकसाधकाः।
नमामि देवं चिद्रूपं विशुद्धं परमं भजे॥

"Even Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva in charge of the whole creation on their respective roles, are just inseparable part of Śrī Rāma."

The *Rāmakathā* (Story of Śrī Rāma) had its origin in divine realm, as said in a *Śloka:—*

कथा रामायणस्यापि नित्यं भवति यद्गृहे।
तद गृहं तीर्थरूपं हि दुष्टानां पापनाशनम्॥

"That house becomes a holy *Tīrtha* (place of pilgrimage) wherein *Rāma-Kathā* is recited every day and there the sins of even wicked persons are destroyed."

Another *Śloka* speaks about the truth that when all sins of a person accumulated from previous births come to an end, then only intense love for *Rāmāyaṇa* is developed.

Incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu—

There is a clear mention in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* that Lord Viṣṇu assured various gods on their request to eliminate demons from the earth because of their brutal assaults on thousands of saints and sages, that He will take birth in four forms (brothers) as sons of king Daśaratha.

In the same context He also assured that he shall rule over the world for eleven thousand years.

Hanumān's introduction of Rāma to Rāvaṇa—

As Hanumān jī knew the absolute divinity of Śrī Rāma, he

told this truth to Rāvaṇa and asked him to release Sītājī or face consequences of destruction of his whole clan. Hanumān jī says:—

"Śrī Rāma is capable enough in finishing the whole creation and again creating a new one."

He also reminds Rāvaṇa that Śrī Rāma is equal to lord Viṣṇu in valour and vigour. There is no one among all in gods, demons, human beings, animals, birds and other living beings who could engage him in battle. After committing such a crime against Śrī Rāma (abducting Sītājī) it is impossible for you to live any longer. Even four headed Lord Brahmā, three eyed Lord Śiva and also the king of gods Indra cannot face Śrī Rāma in battle."

Episode of Paraśurāma—

Prior to this, episode of Paraśurāma proved the supreme divinity of Śrī Rāma beyond doubt. In Tulasī *Rāmāyaṇa,* Paraśurāma appears just after the breaking of the Śiva's bow by Śrī Rāma—a condition put up by king Janaka, father of Sītājī for her marriage. In the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* Paraśurāma appeared on the scene on the way back to Ayodhya of Śrī Rāma, Sītājī, Lakṣmaṇa and others. Without being conscious of the supreme divine status of Śrī Rāma, Paraśurāma made many egotistical statements and even challenged him to make himself worthy of fighting against him by placing an arrow on the bow of Lord Viṣṇu being in his possession. Upon hearing it, Śrī Rāma in no time, forcibly snatched the bow as it was the limit of insults inflicted on him. He tolerated up to the point because of elderly presence of his father Daśaratha and also *Guru* Vasiṣṭha and *Guru* Viśwāmitra.

Now Śrī Rāma said angrily—"Well, see my vigour and valour. I have been tolerating you to this extent only because of your being a *Brāhmaṇa* and also a friend of my *Guru* Viśwāmitra. I will still not use this sure killer arrow against you but it will certainly take away all of your divine powers gained after severe penance restricting your movements to

various *Lokas* i.e., worlds. The arrow after fixing upon the bow, cannot remain ineffective. It has to hit a target."

Paraśurāma was amazed to the extent that he became motionless for a while and his divine power in the form of a bright light came out from his body and entered into the divine body of Śrī Rāma. Paraśurāma spoke at last:-

"No doubt, you are Lord Viṣṇu—the killer of demon Madhu."

The knowledge of Daśaratha about Śrī Rāma—

Sometime after reaching Ayodhya, King Daśaratha decided to make Śrī Rāma crown prince of his vast kingdom. Special virtues of Śrī Rāma were narrated at the time—"All the four sons of king Daśaratha like his own four arms were very dear to him. One of them, Śrī Rāma because of his many qualities was more loved. One more reason—he was eternal Viṣṇu incarnated with a resolve, on the request of gods, to kill the great monster Rāvaṇa.

Rāma embodiment of *Dharma*—

Śrī Rāma alone killed fourteen thousand demons including their chieftains—Khar and Dūṣaṇa in an encounter whom Rāvaṇa considered as equals to him in valour and strength. Could this be ever possible by even bravest of brave person? That proves beyond doubt the supernatural powers of Śrī Rāma.

In another episode, Mārīca tried his best to pursuade Rāvaṇa to end enmity with Śrī Rāma when the latter came to him with a request to assume the form of a golden deer so that Sītājī gets attracted towards him for his most beautiful skin. Thus she would request Śrī Rāma to kill him for her and during the process he (Rāvaṇa) will try to abduct Sītājī with his own deceptive appearance in form of a monk.

Mārīca had already tasted the effectiveness of Śrī Rāma's arrow—thrown hundreds of miles away in a sea by a single shot. So he told Rāvaṇa very clearly that the moment Śrī Rāma will look angrily towards him (Rāvaṇa) in battle his life would

come to an end. He himself could remain alive inspite of the hitting of Śrī Rāma's deadly arrow because the latter did not want to kill him. Since then he has been seeing Śrī Rāma everywhere and in every object.

Mārīca further reveals in two lines his correct knowledge of the divine virtues of Śrī Rāma and Sītājī when he says in 37th *Sarga* of *Aranya Kānda*:-

रामो विग्रहवान् धर्मः साधुः सत्यपराक्रमः।
राजा सर्वस्य लोकस्य देवानामिव वासवः॥
कथं नु तस्य वैदेहीं रक्षितां स्वेन तेजसा।
इच्छसे प्रसभं हर्तुं प्रभामिव विवस्वतः॥

"Rāma is *Dharma* incarnate, saint and truthful. He is ruler of the whole world as Indra in gods. How do you intend to take away his consort Sītā by force? Can anybody take away brilliance from the sun? She is well protected by her own spiritual power."

Śrī Rāma speaks of himself—

There is a very interesting episode in the *Rāmāyaṇa* about crossing over of Vibhīṣaṇa to the side of Śrī Rāma after Rāvaṇa kicked his brother out of Lanka. When the news flashed about the impending surrender, Sugrīva, the chief of the monkey army had his own doubts about the genuineness of his case. When Śrī Rāma came to know his mind he told Sugrīva in clear terms "O king of monkeys, Vibhīṣaṇa may be a villain or a saint, could ever these demons harm me in a slightest possible manner?"

He further adds—"Whenever I want, I can kill all the demons and semidemons like *Piśācas, Rākṣasas, Yakṣas* etc., just by the tip of my finger.

He continues "May he be Vibhīṣaṇa or Rāvaṇa himself, let him come. I have pardoned him already."

In this context he spoke of his eternal vow to pardon and protect a person forever who surrenders and just says to me "I am yours." I make him fearless among all living being."

सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते।
अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद् व्रतं मम॥

These words of Śrī Rāma though spoken in human form actually speak of basic characteristic of God Himself. His devotees and dependents always remember this vow full of divine grace and kindness for getting inspiration and inner strength and thereby feeling reassured and protected.

There are many episodes connected with the battle of Lanka which clearly speak of the divinity of Śrī Rāma. But there are some which create confusion and doubt if viewed in pieces and out of context—the one is quoted very often when Śrī Rāma responds to praises showered on him by various gods mentioning his divine origin and form. Śrī Rāma says:—

आत्मानं मानुषं मन्ये रामं दशरथात्मजम्।
सोऽहं यश्च यतश्चाहं भगवांस्तद् ब्रवीतु मे॥

"O gods I consider myself a human being—son of Daśaratha. What I am and from where I have come, you may better tell me."

Lord Brahmā speaks of Rāma's divinity—

In this connection many scholars blissfully miss the truth narrated by Lord Brahmā in 19 *Ślokas* proving thereby that Rāma is supreme God Viṣṇu, keeper of *Sudarśana Cakra* with no beginning and no end. He had incarnated in the form of fish, boar, Vāmana and Kṛṣṇa. He himself is Lord Viṣṇu and his wife Sītā is Lakṣmī. He is the creator and destroyer of the universe. Lord Brahmā further says that he himself is Rāma's heart and Goddess Saraswatī is his tongue. The whole universe does not exist without Rāma.

What Śrī Rāma said about his own human identity does not in any way contradict his reality. What else a person of highest qualities like him could have said about himself under the circumstances mentioned above. In fact all the great incarnations have revealed their supreme divine identity only under compelling circumstances—either with a view to gratifying a genuine

devotee or a saint or to create terror in the hearts of wicked demons.

What to speak of Lord Brahmā, embodiment of Supreme knowledge, even the wife of the enemy Rāvaṇa, Mandodarī, was aware of Śrī Rāma's supreme divinity. She narrates the relevant truth while crying over the dead body of her husband in the battlefield.

She says in the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*:—

व्यक्तमेष महायोगी परमात्मा सनातनः।
अनादिमध्यनिधनो महतः परमो महान्। तमसः परमो धाता शंखचक्र गदाधरः॥

"Assuming a human semblance, prompted as He was by the desire to do good to all the worlds and surrounded by all the gods, who had taken the form of (so many) monkeys, evidently the celebrated Lord Viṣṇu of unfailing prowess, the eternal Supreme Spirit, a great master of *Yoga,* the gracious Ruler of all the (three) worlds, as well as their sustainer, who has no beginning, middle or end is supremely greater than the great and stands (eternally) beyond darkness (ignorance) who carries a conch, a discus and a mace (on His person) and is distinguished by the (mark of) Śrīvatsa (a curl of white hair) on the breast, who is constantly endowed with fortune, is invincible, everlasting and perpetual, made short work of you, a terrible enemy of gods, alongwith the ogres who surrounded you. After subduing the senses (including the mind, the internal sense) (all) the three worlds were conquered by you (in the course of the austerities practised by you) by the senses themselves (who have ceased to corporate with you) as though they recollected their old grudge against you (occasioned by their discomfiture at your hands). The moment your brother, Khara, was actually killed by Śrī Rāma in Janasthana, even though surrounded by numerous ogres, it became evident that Śrī Rāma was really no mortal. (Nay) we (all) felt perturbed (about our future) the moment Hanumān penetrated by dint of his prowess deep into the city of Lanka, which was difficult

to penetrate into even for gods. This nemesis has come upon you since you did not heed my advice. You were being (repeatedly) admonished by me to the effect that no hostility should be entered into with Śrī Rāma (a scion of Raghu) *(Translation Gita Press)*.

Divinity of Sītājī—

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa depicts Sītājī as inseparable Supreme energy or *Śakti* of Śrī Rāma. Nevertheless, there are many episodes wherein Sītājī like her husband Śrī Rāma behaves as any ordinary human being would do under those circumstances. After killing of Rāvaṇa, when Sītājī comes to Śrī Rāma, the latter, in the presence of millions of monkeys and gods including Lord Brahmā, expresses doubts about the purity of her physical body because of her living in the custody of Rāvaṇa, a behaviour not in keeping with the dignity of a great man or a divine person. Sītājī replies back—"O brave, why do you say such unreasonable and harsh words like an ordinary person says to her very ordinary wife."

She immediately ordered Lakṣmaṇa to prepare a burning pyre for her and she jumped into it. After a few moments, in full view of the same vast audience, the fire god appeared in person and testified the purity of Sītājī. Thereupon, Śrī Rāma accepted Sītā jī who remained unaffected by the fire, saying—"Had he not invited the fire test of her wife, people would have called him a passionate and foolish person."

Śrī Rāma further says—"Sītājī is purest of pure among all the three *Lokas* (worlds). I cannot leave Sītājī just as a great person cannot leave his fame."

Sītājī could face this unparalleled test and came out with flying colours only because of her divine personality. It was reconfirmed in an episode in the last moments of her life. In that episode, Sītājī is again called upon to prove her fidelity. She prays to Mother Earth "O mother, if I have remained faithful to my husband all along my life and not thought of any other man even in dreams, kindly take me unto you." After she repeated

it three times, the earth broke into two pieces then and there. Goddess Earth appeared in person sitting at glittering golden throne. She took Sītājī in her motherly lap and disappeared under the earth while every body including Śrī Rāma looked on helplessly. The birth and the end, the appearance and the disappearance of the *Śakti* proves her (Sītājī) to be not an ordinary human being.

Daśaratha speaks—

After the God of fire Agnideva testified Sītājī's purity in person in previous episode, all the gods showered flowers on both Sītā and Rāma. Daśarathajī, the deceased father of Śrī Rāma, also appeared at the site and embraced Śrī Rāma with all the sentiments and fatherly affection. He spoke to Śrī Rāma—"I came to know your real identity only today through the great gods present here. Supreme God himself incarnated in your form to kill Rāvaṇa."

वधार्थं रावणस्यैव विहितं पुरुषोत्तमम्।

Thereafter Daśaratha told Sītājī—never be angry with Rāma over this event of sacrifice (fire-test). He is your well-wisher and he has created this situation with a view to making the world know about your purity. This incident will leave other woman's fame far behind." Daśarathajī, then left to *Indraloka* by the same plane—*'Vimāna'*.

Hanumān jī and Puṣpaka *Vimāna*—

Śrī Hanumānjī, incarnation of Lord Śiva, proved himself the greatest *Dāsa* (attendant) by his most sincere and unparralleled service to Śrī Rāma who considered himself a debter to Hanumān jī. The divinity in Hanumānjī is well proved by the very fact that he was blessed by Sītājī a rare boon to be alive forever.

What to speak of such great personalities, even the non-human objects connected with Śrī Rāma were divine in nature. The supernatural weapons given by such great *Ṛṣis* like Viśwāmitra and Agastya to Śrī Rāma, were invisible to others and remained in the heart of the Master. They used to come

out on calling for the sure shot to be returned to the master again after hitting the target.

The legendary *Puṣpaka Vimāna,* though a flying plane, used to attend upon his supreme master Śrī Rāma (originally belonged to Kubera, forcibly taken away by Rāvaṇa) in the human form. After Śrī Rāma's coronation, Kubera decided to send Puṣpaka again to Ayodhya to be in his permanent service. He appeared before Śrī Rāma in very bright human form. Śrī Rāma paid his respect by offering him flowers, rice-puffs and sweets. Puṣpaka gave Kubera's message to Śrī Rāma and requested to take him into his own service. Rāma thanked him and Kubera for the great gesture and assured Puṣpaka that he would call him in hour of need.

When Puṣpaka disappeared from the site, Bharatajī and a witness to this scene, said:-

"O bravest of braves, you are God personified. It is why, under your reign even the non-human beings speak like human beings."

In Tulasī *Rāmāyaṇa,* the story of Rāma has been narrated in the form of questions and answers between Pārvatī and Śiva, the former asking and the latter replying after many questions, Pārvatī asked in the end—

बहुरि कहहु करुनायतन कीन्ह जो अचरज राम।
प्रजा सहित रघुबंसमनि किमि गवने निज धाम॥

"Therefore, relate O gracious Lord, the miracle done by Rāma to proceed to his divine abode alongwith all his subjects."

By way of this question Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa tried to point out a wellknown and important episode of Rāma which has not been dealt with in detail in his *Rāmāyaṇa.* This episode is first of its kind in the entire human history whereas the subjects of the greatest king on earth which include even insects, trees, plants, etc., alongwith the brave monkeys and bears capable of changing into human forms at will, followed their mentor to an end by entering into deep waters of Sarayū. It was not a

suicide pact as some people ignorant of the divine aspect of the life of Śrī Rāma, are misinterpreting. It was an example of the devotees having once come in contact with Supreme God even when in human form, not being able to bear the separation. The relationship between king Rāma and his subjects was that of the relationship between God with the awakened souls, *Paramātman* with *Ātmans*.

As Rāma entered into Sarayū he transformed into his original form of Lord Viṣṇu and he asked Lord Brahmā who was present there at the most rare and auspicious occasion, to grant the whole assembly of men, animals and other objects the same divine world as of his own. Thereupon Lord Brahmā granted every one of them the *Sanātanika Loka* close to his own abode accompanied with all the merits of *Brahmā*. Sītājī had already entered into the abode of Mother Earth and Lakṣmaṇa jī went back to his own in a different way. Subsequently, Śrī Rāma came to know about his own impending end after eleven thousand years of his life. He thought to transfer the reigns in the hands of his most beloved brother Bharata.But he told Śrī Rāma in clear words that he could not think of his own entity without Him and he was bound to follow Him. Śatrughna also decided the same way. Śrī Rāma had to fulfil the wishes of his remaining two brothers by taking them with him to face their unprecedented divine end. Hanumān, Vibhīṣaṇa, Jāmbavanta, Mayanda and Dwivida were advised to remain here. Hanumānjī said: "As long as your divine saga will remain on the earth so long shall I stay here carrying out your orders.

As was the appearance of Śrī Rāma in four arms before his mother Kausalyā, so was his end in the form of Lord Viṣṇu and in between various episodes amply prove the divinity of Śrī Rāma as an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. He certainly played the role of a most ideal human being capable of inspiring the whole humanity for many years to come.



Śrī Mūla Rāma

—S. Ambhrini

Śrī Mūla Rāma idol was worshipped by Śrī Dāśarathi Rāma in *Tretā Yuga.* The above idol is even now being worshipped by *Mādhva Sampradāya Saṁnyāsins.*

Now let us see the hoary antiquity of Śrī Mūla Rāma idol. The glories of Śrī Mūla Rāma have been stated in *Vāsiṣṭha Rāmāyaṇa, Mārkaṇḍeya Rāmāyaṇa* and *Puṣkara Māhātmya.*

Śrī Mūla Rāma idol is *Swayaṁ Vyakta* (self manifested) idol as per *Vāsiṣṭha Rāmāyaṇa.*

स्वयं व्यक्तं महीपाल ब्रह्मणो देवतार्चनम्।
इक्ष्वाकुप्रमुखैः सम्यक् पूजितं मानवोत्तमैः॥

In some *Purāṇas* it has been stated that Viśvakarmā (विश्वकर्मा) cast Śrī Mūla Rāma idol.

Caturmukha Brahmadeva worshipped this idol for many aeons and handed it over to Jābāli *Ṛṣi* for his worship.

Then afteı performing severe penance Kailāsapati Mahā Rudra obtained this idol and worshipped it. Then Pārvatī Dakṣa Prajāpati, Saubhari *Muni* (सौभरि) and others worshipped this idol in succession. Then the idol reverted back to *Brahma Loka* and worshipped by Brahmadeva.

Now Sūrya Deva, Sun-god, made severe penance and Brahmadeva gave this idol to Sūrya Deva. Then it was worshipped in succession by the solar dynasty kings like Vaivasvata Manu, Ikṣvāku Mahārāja, Māndhātā, Ānaraṇya Triśaṅku, Hariścandra, Dilīpa, Raghu, Aja and Daśaratha.

Out of gratitude to Śrī Mūla Rāma Deva, Śrī Daśaratha named his son as Rāma after the name of Mūla Rāma. Even

Rāma in His *Avatāra Kāla,* worshipped Śrī Mūla Rāma. Then Lakṣmaṇa obtained the idol and worshipped it till his end. At the time of Śrī Lakṣmaṇa's exit from this world, one *Muni* by name Gṛtsamada (गृत्समद) obtained the idol for his worship. Lakṣmaṇa handed over the idol to Gṛtsamada (गृत्समद) with the request that the same should be handed over to Śrī Hanumān who was staying at *Kimpuruṣa Khaṇḍa* (किम्पुरुष खण्ड) at that time.

Therefore after worshipping, Gṛtsamada handed over the idol to Hanumānjī.

Hanumān worshipped the idol till the end of *Dwāpara Yuga.* When Bhīmasena Deva met Hanumān at the time of fetching of *Saugandhika Puṣpa* (सौगन्धिक पुष्प). Hanumān handed over the Mūla Rāma to Bhīma and then onwards Bhīma and Draupadī worshipped the idol.

Purāṇa states thus—"तस्मै प्रादाद्रामचन्द्रप्रतिमां सीतया सह". After Bhīma the idol was worshipped by Parīkṣit Mahārāja, Janamejaya and others till Kṣemaka Rājā (क्षेमक राजा). Then the minister of Kṣemaka Rājā Śrī Viṣṇu Varmā handed over this idol to Gajapati Rāja kingdom (modern Orissa) king.

The original Rāma and original Sītā icons were lying uncared in the treasury chest of Gajapati kings.

Śrī Madhvācārya's (1238—1317 AD) disciple Śrī Narahari Tīrtha ruled as a regent of Gajapati kingdom for 12 years. At the time of his departure from the Gajapati kingdom, he took away the idols of Mūla Rāma and Mūla Sītā (मूल राम, मूल सीता) as parting gifts and brought it to Śrī Madhva on *Utthāna Dwādaśī* day. Subsequently Śrī Madhva worshipped Śrī Mūla Rāma for 88 days till he disappeared from the earthly scene.

Subsequently his disciples started worshipping Śrī Mūla Rāma. Till now it is being worshipped by *Mādhva Yatis.* Thus the hoary tradition is being maintained.



Two Episodes from Rāmakathā—their Relevance

—D. S. Bajpai

The concerned two episodes from *Rāmakathā,* the banishment of Rāma and the banishment of Sītā from Ayodhya are well-known in every Hindu and many other households. For the benefit of readers in India and abroad, the episodes may be briefly told.

King Daśaratha of Ayodhya had four sons by his three queens. Conscious of his approaching old age, he decided to hand over the reigns of government to his eldest son, Rāma by his eldest queen, Kausalyā and started preparations for the coronation. Kaikeyī, the youngest queen also loved Rāma very much but at the instigation of her maid-in-waiting, Mantharā she was led to believe that her interests would be best served if her own son, Bharata was crowned to be the king in place of Rāma. King Daśaratha was under obligation to grant her two boons promised earlier in return for her help rendered on the battlefield. On this occasion, she asked the king to fulfil his promise by granting her two boons—first that Bharata be made the king and second, Rāma be exiled from Ayodhya to lead the life of a hermit in some forest without any royal equipage or trappings for fourteen years. Bharata was not present in Ayodhya at that time otherwise, the tragedy would have been averted because all the four brothers, specially Rāma and Bharata were inextricably bound in mutual selfless love and affection.

Upholding truth and duty, Daśaratha was not able to say 'no' to his queen and Rāma left Ayodhya. His consort Sītā and brother Lakṣmaṇa born of queen Sumitrā accompanied him in exile.

The other episode relates to the time when after fourteen

years of exile and killing the demon Rāvaṇa of Lanka Rāma returned to Ayodhya and started ruling there. People were happy and prosperous and *Rāmarājya* became widely known for justice, generosity and dedication to the service of the people. As was but natural, Rāma kept himself regularly informed about the needs of the people and also whether his subjects had anything to complain of. One day, as a solitary exception, He learnt that a washerman had some disparaging remarks to say against Him. The washerman's wife had gone out and remained absent from the house for the whole night. He abused and thrashed her and turned her out of the house saying that he was not Rāma who admitted his wife Sītā in his household even after her remaining at Rāvaṇa's palace for so many days.

Upholder of ideals and dutiful Rāma, brushing aside all other considerations ordered His younger brother Lakṣmaṇa to take Sītā to some jungle, even though she was pregnant and leave her there and quietly return without telling her anything. Sītā was picked up in a desolate condition by *Ṛṣi* Vālmīki at whose hermitage she gave birth to two sons, Lava and Kuśa. As they grew up, they learnt, among other things, also the art of fighting.

At Ayodhya, Rāma decided to perform *Aśwamedha Yajña,* the Horse Sacrifice in which the horse of the sovereign king accompanied by a fighting force, goes round the lands of other rulers. Those who accept the overlordship of the king allow the horse to pass through their territory. Anyone who does not accept such overlordship stops the horse and gives a fight. Rāma's horse was stopped by Lava and Kuśa and his army was routed. Rāma also arrives at the spot with the reinforcement. Ultimately, the identity of the two boys was revealed. Rāma and Sītā came face to face but Sītā refused to go back to Ayodhya. She requested, mother earth to break asunder and she was engulfed by the chasm so created—a real tragic end.

Unflinching devotion to duty which includes keeping one's promise is universally enjoined upon every responsible member

of the society. It not only does good to others but is also self-satisfying. Where duty is performed by gladly trampling upon love for own near and dear ones, it is hailed as something edifying, a lesson in fortitude and sacrifice. Doing one's duty under adverse circumstances tries a man as by fire and earns for him our awe and respect.

But two episodes from *Rāmakathā,* Daśaratha's banishment of Rāma from Ayodhya and Rāma's banishment of Sītā have failed to earn popular acclaim—acts hardly worthy of emulation. The common man has sympathised and wept in agony over what happened to Rāma in the first and to Sītā in the second episode. Whatever the ethics of punishment given by Rāma to Sītā, the social outrage lingers in the mind of the common man even after thousands of years of the episode. As the women sing their folk songs in plaintive tones of the banishment of Sītā, describing her as giving her infant princes bedding of grass and cover of leaves and deer skin and expressing her resolve never to see the face of Rāma again, they cannot sing the songs without shedding profuse tears. For these dutiful actions of theirs, Daśaratha and Rāma have hardly been given any credit.

And the claim of having done the duty gladly? The way both of them ended their lives exposes the hollowness of such a claim to an uninitiated person. Daśaratha died immediately of shock and remorse and Rāma could not smile even for a day for the rest of his life and ended it by wading through the surging waves of the river Sarayū uttering the name of Sītā who herself had died tragically.

Even so, there is something to be said in extenuation. An example will best explain. A question is often posed: if some one protects and hides a person pursued by a killer and the killer asks the protector whether he has seen the man, should he speak the truth or a lie to save the fugitive. Nine out of ten of us will at once come out with a reply that a lie would be justifiable under the circumstances. But that is not the correct

approach. The activities of a person lie in two spheres termed as self-regarding and other-regarding. In his personal capacity, he has to save the person taking shelter with him even if he has to lay down his life in protecting him. On the social front, he has to be truthful. Therefore, his answer to the killer should be: Yes, I have seen the man. He is under my protection. To get to him you will first have to fight and walk over my dead body. This thing Gāndhījī aptly put in one sentence—a man of truth has to be a man of courage. That is what both Daśaratha and Rāma did in the two episodes. "राखेउ रायँ सत्य मोहि त्यागी" explains Rāma to Bharata at Chitrakuta. The king in his social discipline kept the truth, his promise, unmindful of Rāma. "तनु परिहरेउ पेम पन लागी" having done that, he gave up his life in love for Rāma. That is how he reconciled the two apparently irreconsilable ends. That is what Rāma also did in relation to Sītā. Unmindful of her, He did His social duty and then out of love for her He renounced all His comforts and cheerfulness and ultimately His life. Thus His pattern of social discipline and personal conduct remained reconciled. This takes much of the edge off the bitterness the common man feels in respect of the two episodes. By adopting this approach, we can see the relevance of the two episodes for our life and behaviour.

Yet, there is an unmistakable lesson which must not be forgotten. And, it is this: a great responsibility rests with the seeker of a boon or a favour as also with the person who grants it to see that a third person is not sacrificed in the bargain. Kaikeyī was acting foolishly in her blind selfishness and lure for power. The king presented a pathetic figure of an old doting husband snared by the beauty of his young wife. Between them, they could have gone to any length of asking and bestowing; she could have asked for his purse, his property, his kingdom, even his life. The dutiful king, true to his promise would have earned laurels by granting any or all of the demands. The washerman was foolish and uninformed. Rāma to be sure, had

no personal doubts about the chastity of Sītā. The matter could have been straightened up between Him and the washerman or his subjects. If he was so much obsessed by the idea of an ideal kingship and thought himself unfit to rule any longer with such an accusation, he could have given up the throne and retired with Sītā to a life of hermitage for the rest of his life. But Daśaratha and Rāma both in their discharge of duty made sacrificial lamb of a third person—Daśaratha banishing Rāma and Rāma banishing Sītā. That is the reason why in the popular mind, they do not enjoy any credit for their acts. It is, in fact, the sacrificed persons Rāma in the first and Sītā in the second episode who earn universal respect and sympathy. Rāma and Sītā did not rebel on banishment. In the feudal society of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* periods, it could be possible to treat a member of a family in a lower position, a wife a son, or a younger brother and the like, as a piece of private property. But such situations are explosive. The question is as much social as ethical and the force and finality of the moral derived should be self-evident that in the bargain of asking or granting a favour or boon or fulfilling a given promise, no third person should be involved as a sacrifice, otherwise, it would poison at the very fountain head the genial current of life. Its relevance is very significant in the context of daily social give and take.

There is a mantle of divine predetermined dispensation thrown over the *Rāmakathā*. The Supreme Being incarnates as Rāma the son of Daśaratha with the avowed object of destroying the ungodly and he has to roam about in the forests to kill the demons who had been pestering, the hermits and has finally to cross over to Lanka to kill the demon king Rāvaṇa. Kaikeyī does what she did under divine promptings through her maid Mantharā. Daśaratha is already under a curse to die on separation from his son. If we look at the story from this point of view, the characters become puppets in the hands of divine preordination and the whole charm of *Rāmakathā* is gone. There

remains hardly anything to learn or unlearn. It is essentially a human drama and the characters are intensely human. It is this aspect which has gripped the popular mind. As the drama unfolds itself, we cannot avert our eyes from the human suffering. The past hangs as a dead weight upon us and we feel the need for redefining whether we are one with the right to receive or one with the duty to bestow.



विक्रमस्ते यथा विष्णो रूपं चैवाश्विनोरिव । बुद्ध्या बृहस्पतेस्तुल्यः प्रजापतिसमो ह्यसि ॥
क्षमा ते पृथिवीतुल्या तेजसा भास्करोपमः । वेगस्ते वायुना तुल्यो गाम्भीर्यमुदधेरिव ॥
अप्रकम्पो यथा स्थाणुश्चन्द्रे सौम्यत्वमीदृशम् । नेदृशाः पार्थिवाः पूर्वं भवितारो नराधिप ॥

"Your prowess is like that of Lord Viṣṇu, and your comeliness is like that of the (twin-born) Aświns (the physicians of gods). You are a compeer of Sage Bṛhaspati (the preceptor of gods) in intelligence and (in ruling over the people) you are the equal to Brahmā (the Lord of creation). Your forbearance is (unshaken) like the earth; in glory you are a compeer of the sun. Your onrush vies with the wind, while your profundity is like that of the deep ocean. You are unshakable (in conflict) like Lord Śiva; such delightfulness as exists in you is found in the moon. Kings such as you, never existed in the past nor will they be (hereafter), O suzerian lord of human beings!,"

(V. R.)

संत असंतन्हि कै असि करनी । जिमि कुठार चंदन आचरनी ॥
काटइ परसु मलय सुनु भाई । निज गुन देइ सुगंध बसाई ॥ ४ ॥

"The conduct of saints and the wicked is analogous to that of sandal-wood and the axe. Mark, brother: the axe cuts down a sandal-tree, while the latter in its turn perfumes the axe by imparting its virtue (fragrance) to it."

—*Mānasa*

Rāmo Vigrahavān Dharmaḥ

—K. Keshavan

Our *Sanātana Dharma* is the Eternal Religion based on *Śruti* and the *Smṛti.* The *Itihāsa* and *Purāṇas* are also the foundation and the walls of the *Sanātana Dharma.* The *Rāmāyaṇa,* the history of Śrī Rāmacandra is wrought into the very core of every Indian man, woman and child. Śrī Rāma is not only a great warrior, but he was also an *Avatāra,* a divine incarnation. Vālmīki called him as 'धर्मज्ञः' who knows *Dharma. Dharma* is the first of the four *Puruṣārthas.* The fundamental aspirations or values. Rāma upheld and practised the values as mentioned in *Vedas.* We shall examine a few of these qualities in this brief essay. Rāma is the God of *Dharma* incarnate good and righteous and possesses true valour. Vālmīki praised Rāma "रक्षिता जीव लोकस्य धर्मस्य परिरक्षिता". Rāma protects all beings and especially protects *Dharma.* In *Sundara Kāṇḍa* Sītā refers to 'अनृशंस्यः'. That is sympathising with the suffering of others as the Supreme *Dharma* of Śrī Rāmacandra. She also called Him as *Karuṇa Kākutstha,* the very incarnation of *Karuṇā* (करुणा). This good trait is also described as 'अनुकंपा' and 'अनुक्रोश'. 'अनुकंपा' means mental state of one person having pity at the sight of another shaken by grief. 'अनुक्रोश' describes the wail of a person who is unable to stand the grief of another. This is also well said by the subjects of Ayodhya at the time of Daśaratha announcing that he intends to hand over the reins of the kingdom to Rāma. While narrating the many sweet qualities of Rāma they described Rāma as—

व्यसनेषु मनुष्याणां भृशं भवति दुःखितः।

(*Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*11. 2. 40)

Rāma would Himself be immersed in grief at the sight of another's distress. When Vāli was slain by Rāma, Sugrīva was struck with grief and Rāma too became grief stricken. This can be seen in the opening *Śloka* of the 25th *Sarga* in *Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍa* "समानशोकः काकुत्स्थः" Rāma and His brother were touched with keen sorrow at the pitiable plight of Sugrīva and his monkeys. Rāma's grief was as great as that of Tārā, Vāli's wife and Aṅgada her son. Sītā herself upheld the *Dharma* as practised by Rāma in *Sundara Kāṇḍa* (21.20) "विदितः सर्वधर्मज्ञः शरणागतवत्सल". Sītā in her advice to Rāvaṇa referred to Rāma as *Dharmajña* and at once expanded it so as to bring out it a content *Śaraṇāgata Vatsala*—protecting those who seek his protection. Sītā too was an indispensable ingredient in the dispensation of this *Dharma*. We can see instances of Sītā saved even the worst offenders whenever she was by the side of Rāma. Tāṭakā, Mārīca, Virādha, Khara and Dūṣaṇa were killed only when Sītā was not by the side of Rāma. On the otherhand Jayanta, Indra's son, who assumed the form of a crow pecking at Sītā's breast causing deadly wound, blood trickled down. When Rāma saw this he pulled out a grass from his *Darbhāsana* and aimed it against Kākāsura. The missile gave Jayanta a hot chase wherever he went and yet he could not get asylum anywhere. He came back and fell down dead beat in front of Rāma, with legs pointing towards him. Sītā who was grace personified "देव्या कारुण्यरूपया" corrected the posture of the crow. She also pleaded with Rāma for the deliverence of the crow. This instance is well narrated in the *Padma Purāṇa*. Rāma therefore let off the crow who deserved to be slain with slight injury, blinding one of his eyes. In *Sundara Kāṇḍa* (38. 33) it is stated as "वधार्हमपि काकुत्स्थः कृपया पर्यपालयत्" Rāma spared Jayanta out of grace. This grace is an account of Sītā's inspiration correcting the posture of the crow. She made it appear that he was prostrating before Rāma. This is the Sītā's unbounded generosity which saved Kākāsura of being slain. Jayanta (Kākāsura) did not perform

absolute surrender of his own but through the act of Sītā and was saved through her grace only. Sītā had also advised Rāvaṇa to surrender to Rāma. Rāma also gave him one chance to go back at the end of the first battle to have a night's rest and come back the next day. He could not get the grace of either Rāma or Sītā and was slain. The doctrine of self surrender is taught in *Bhagavadgītā, Rāmāyaṇa, Pañcarātra Śāstras.* The lord is the refuge of the whole universe. He is adorned with the requisite perfections. The sages were amply qualified to tread the path of devotion. They sought out the saviour and prayed to him for protection. The result is they freed from all sin and evil, reached the abode of bliss. When Vibhīṣaṇa sought refuge in Rāma's feet and appealed with folded hands: "सर्व लोक शरण्याय राघवाय महात्मने". While all except Hanumān vehemently opposed his admission to Rāma's camp. Rāma admitted him by giving all protection as he is the *Saraṇāgata Vatsala.*

When Rāma found that a mere bird (Jaṭāyu) nobly sacrificed his life to save Sītā from the clutches of Rāvaṇa, Rāma freed Jaṭāyu from the circle of birth and death. Rāma performed the rites of cremation to Jaṭāyu as a reward of his unparalleled merit. Rāma came to establish the *Dharma* of the *Vedas* and for him caste is no consideration as the Jaṭāyu was the prince of *Bhaktas.* In *Araṇya Kāṇḍa* the hermits of Daṇḍaka prayed Rāma to save them from the cruelties of the *Rākṣasas.* Rāma fulfilled their desire by killing those *Asuras.* The doctrine of surrender is the highest truth in our religion. Rāma's *Abhaya Pradāna* to Vibhīṣaṇa is as famous as that of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's message to the world. Whenever a man is over loaded with misery as the fruit of his past actions. Whenever troubles assail him from everyside he appeals and cries. Lord, misery has marked me for its own. Powerless am I to face the same. No other protector have I but you, my only refuge is in your mercy. At this moment certainly god comes to the resque of his *Bhakta* saying fear not I shall be your saviour.

Rāma's words "सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते। अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद् व्रतं मम" to Sugrīva is the highest doctrine of surrender in all its grandeur. Rāma assures every creature of this world that he who takes refuge in him would certainly be saved forgiving fully any of his previous sins. Rāma is the champion and the living exponent of the doctrine of refuge. When Bharata pleaded Rāma to return to Ayodhya and when sage Jābāli also said to Rāma "O Rāma, do not ruin the happiness of yourself and of your young and beautiful wife by rejecting this generous and sincere offer of Bharata. Rāma's reply that truth sustains the earth and heaven His devotion to parents and promise given to him cannot be changed. He said further vain would be all learning all sacrifice without truth and *Dharma.* He who destroys *Dharma* will be destroyed by it. He who upholds it will be upheld by it. Bharata did not rule the kingdom. He took the sandals of Rāma and celebrated their coronation. These ruled the kingdom as Rāma's representative. His rule was just and efficient and it was a model one. Sages of Daṇḍakāraṇya praised him in all noble words "Oh Rāma, we are all admiration for your steadfastness having given up the immense wealth of a vast kingdom you would not yield to Bharata's entreaties to get back to Ayodhya and rule we see in you the very personification of *Dharma* and truthfulness, we seek refuge in you beseech you to relieve us from the enormous sufferings we are undergoing at the hands of demons. On hearing their pitiable appeal Rāma determined to save them. Rāma who is a speaker of truth He is *Satyavān.* Daśaratha, his father himself told his wife Kaikeyī about Rāma as "सत्येन लोकाञ्जयति द्विजान् दानेन राघवः". Rāma could conquer all the worlds by sheer truthfulness. Captivate the Brahmans. by gifts. Rāma Himself declared before Kaikeyī that His tongue can never utter anything in two different ways. "रामो द्विर्नाभिभाषते". Rāma's fidelity and single minded devotion to His wife is an example to others. When the Lord came down to earth as Śrī Rāma, the *Vedas* also came down

in a symbolic sense as *Śrī Rāmāyaṇa.*

वेदवेद्ये परे पुंसि जाते दशरथात्मजे।
वेदः प्राचेतसादासीत् साक्षाद्रामायणात्मना॥

The great sage Viśwāmitra himself declared to Daśaratha that Rāma was none other than the Lord of the universe who had come down to the earth.

अहं वेद्मि महात्मानं रामं सत्यपराक्रमम्।



धर्मस्य गोप्ता लोकेऽस्मिंश्चरामि सशरासनः॥
अधर्मकारिणं हत्वा सद्धर्मं पालयाम्यहम्।
दुहिता भगिनी भ्रातुर्भार्या चैव तथा स्नुषा॥
समा यो रमते तासामेकामपि विमूढधीः।
पातकी स तु विज्ञेयः स वध्यो राजभिः सदा॥

"I am the (self-oriented) protector of *Dharma*. Holding bow and arrows move around in the world. I kill the evil-doers and establish the righteousness. Daughter, sister, brother's wife and daughter-in-law—these four are equal. The foolish one who indulges in sexual commerce with anyone of these four, he must be taken to be a great sinner. It is the duty of a king to kill such persons."

—(*A.R. Kiṣ.* 2. 59—61)

अन्यतरामेव वर्तनी ँ स ँ स्करोति हीयतेऽन्यतरा स यथैकपाद्व्रजन्रथो वैकेन चक्रेण वर्तमानो रिष्यत्येवमस्य यज्ञो रिष्यति यज्ञ ँ रिष्यन्तं यजमानोऽनुरिष्यति स इष्ट्वा पापीयान्भवति॥

"He sanctifies only one of the two paths while the other gets destroyed. As a person moving on one foot, or a chariot moving on one wheel, gets destroyed, similarly his sacrifice gets destroyed. When the sacrifice gets destroyed the sacrificer gets destroyed accordingly. By performing the sacrifice he becomes a great sinner."

—*Chāndogyopaniṣad* (IV. 16.3)

Śrī Rāma—In Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa

—Sailesh Brahmachari

In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* Śrī Rāma is depicted not as an incarnation of God, but as a human being, though uncommon. He by dint of his self-restrained behaviour uplifted himself to a godhead. He converted himself from *Nara* to *Nārāyaṇa.* When Rāma annihilated Rāvaṇa (रावण) with all other demons, all the gods approached him and praised him as 'Almighty' or 'All-powerful', Śrī Rāma very politely said—"No, no, I am a human being. I am the son of Daśaratha. He said—''आत्मानं मानुषं मन्ये रामं दशरथात्मजम्''. Vālmīki also, without addressing Rāma as God incarnate, termed him as *Maryādā Puruṣottama*—a dignified superhuman being.

Before writing *Rāmāyaṇa* once Vālmīki asked *Devarṣi* Nārada—

कोन्वस्मिन्सांप्रतं लोके गुणवान्कश्च वीर्यवान्।
धर्मज्ञश्च कृतज्ञश्च सत्यवाक्यो दृढव्रतः॥

"Can you name any person in this world, who is dignified, pure-hearted, fully conversant with religious rules and duties and intently devoted to truth."

Devarṣi Nārada replied—"Yes, I know such a person and he is Rāma (अहं रामं मन्ये..........)."

In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* Rāma's behaviour and activities make us feel that he is our very own and that is why we feel pain to think him as God incarnate. We bow down to gods due to the fact that we feel them nobler, majestic and dignified than us; but this carries a notion that we are inferior to them and thus they are beyond our reach. But a near and dear person is

like one's own self. Rāma is like our own self—our own *Ātmā*.

Let us mention very briefly, some of his behaviours which have made him so dear to everyone.

As a Son—

The proverb goes, "Like father, like son." Śrī Rāma was born in a family where his predecessors were dignified kings like Dilīpa, Raghu, Aja etc. Therefore, it is but natural that Śrī Rāma would also inherit their qualities.

In his very childhood, when sage Viśwāmitra asked Daśaratha to send Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with him to save the *Yajña* from the outrage of the demons, Daśaratha got frightened and declined to part with them. Rāma immediately requested his father not to do so as that may hamper the prestige of the royal family.

Then again, when Rāma was to be coronated and Kaikeyī out of jealousy wanted to send him in exile for fourteen years. Rāma immediately accepted it and prayed to his father, saying, "Father please do not break your promise. That will bring ill fame on our royal family, as you have already promised to grant the boon to her."

But from this if one thinks that Rāma was unjust he will be mistaken. Apparently it seems that Kaikeyī was a wicked, harmful and a crooked natured woman, but the fact was just the reverse. Rāma knew how Kaikeyī saved his father in the battlefield and how she brought him round from the serious illness caused by the wounds from the battle. Further Kaikeyī asked for these boons under the influence of the curse. Had she not asked them the annihilation of Rāvaṇa would not have occured. So what Rāma said and did was just and fair.

As a brother—

Rāma was a brother in the real sense of the term. Bharata and Lakṣmaṇa were more than his life to him. Rāma when asked to renounce the kingdom and give it to Bharata he was not at all perturbed "न विव्यथे राम:" by these words on the contrary he said—"Oh mother, what to speak of the kingdom. I am ever

prepared to renounce even my life for my dear brother Bharata.

Lakṣmaṇa was even more to Rāma. Once Rāma said when Lakṣmaṇa fainted on the battlefield—

न हि मे जीवितेनार्थः सीतया च जयेन च।
को हि मे जीवितेनार्थः त्वयि पञ्चत्वमागते॥
देशे देशे कलत्राणि देशे देशे च बान्धवाः।
तं तु देशं न पश्यामि यत्र भ्राता सहोदरः॥

"My life has no meaning now, nor I desire to rescue Sītā. I do not want to live without Lakṣmaṇa who, though born of separate mother, is more than my real brother."

Again when Lakṣmaṇa out of anger asked Rāma to disobey his father's promise saying that it was all senility on the part of his father, Rāma said—

लक्ष्मीश्चंद्रादपेयाद्वा हिमवान्वा हिमं त्यजेत्।
अतीयात्सागरो............ ॥

"The moon may abandon its beauty, the Himalayas may give up coldness, the ocean may violate its boundaries, but I cannot break the promise of my father and thereby bring woe to my beloved brother Bharata."

Further Rāma's cordial relations with brother was so much that even when he was returning to Ayodhya after completing the period of his exile, he first sent Hanumānjī to Ayodhya to make sure whether Bharata had any desire to rule the kingdom. If there be, he said—"I would prefer to back and settle down in the forest.

As a husband—

Rāma had an unbounded love for Sītā. This is proved by the fact that when Rāma first heard the news of his coronation, he immediately went to Sītā to convey her the good news and also when he got the news of his banishment, he immediately reported it to Sītā. The dearest one is always approached both in extreme pleasure or sorrow.

But many people doubt whether Rāma actually loved Sītā so deeply. They cite the instance of Sītā's abandonment by Rāma.

Sītā's abandonment does not prove that Rāma did not love Sītā. Had it been so, he could marry a second wife, which he did not even after being repeatedly requested. We know according to Vālmīki, later when Rāma was to perform *Aśwamedha Yajña* a wife was essential to sit by his side to fulfil the command of the holy scripture. But Rāma denied and said—"There is no place in the heart of Rāma to anyone, except Sītā as a wife. And Vālmīki says ultimately a golden image of Sītā was made and kept beside Rāma as her emblem. By abandoning Sītā Rāma performed his duty as a king to please his subjects.

Further *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* says when Sītā was abducted by Rāvaṇa, Rāma became so much perturbed that it seems that he lost the balance of his mind. No sooner he heard the news he began to lament very bitterly and ran hither and thither asking any and every object in the forest, whether it be a tree or a stone, or a creeper about the whereabouts of Sītā. It can easily be imagined how deep a love can make one act in such a manner.

Rāma with elders: Rāma gives due respect to everyone. Even to Kaikeyī who exiled Rāma on the day of his coronation, he spoke—"Mother why do you trouble father for such a trifling matter as to enthrone Bharata in my place. I would have carried out your order with reverence, had you told me only once about it. Oh mother, there is no difference as to who rules—Bharata or I."

Then again, when Rāma started to go to the forest, all the citizens of Ayodhya also decided to go with him barring Kaikeyī alone to stay in Ayodhya. At this juncture also Rāma tried his utmost to persuade them to stay in Ayodhya and look after Bharata and Kaikeyī.

Before leaving Ayodhya Rāma went to Daśaratha to ask leave for his departure. He found him (father) very much distressed and unhappy. There he said, "Oh Father, pray do not be unhappy. For so many long years you have performed your duties with name and fame, now, please let me discharge mine."

When Kausalyā repeatedly expressed his desire to accompany

Rāma to the forest he very calmly said—"Mother do not be so much perturbed. My dutiful father, is staying here, you also be here by his side and perform your duties to him."

After winning the battle at Lanka Vasiṣṭha, their family preceptor sent a message to Rāma to return to Ayodhya to which Rāma sent back a message with respect and reverence seeking his permission to stay in the forest till his period of exile is over.

To his enemies: In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* Rāma has expressed a very high opinion about Rāvaṇa. When for the first time Rāvaṇa appeared to wage a war against Rāma looking at him Rāma said to Hanumān, "Look, what a valorous appearance. What a deserving enemy on the battlefield." Hanumān also commented—"Wonderful spirited appearance."

When Mārīca first saw Rāma in the forest he remarked, "Be he a friend or foe, the association of a person like Rāma is always desirable.

After Rāvaṇa was killed in the battle his brother Vibhīṣaṇa declined to do his last rites calling him a brute. Rāma said—"Vibhīṣaṇa do not speak about Rāvaṇa in those terms. He was a valient warrior. Now he is dead, he is no longer our enemy. If you, his brother, deny to perform his funeral ceremonies, I myself shall have to do it.

मरणान्तानि वैराणि निवृत्तं नः प्रयोजनम्।
क्रियतामस्य संस्कारः ममाप्येष यथा तव॥

"After death no enmity continues. Perform his last rites. He, now, is same both to you and to me."

From this very short article it is evident that Vālmīki depicted Rāma as a human being, who became *Nārāyaṇa* for his uncommon qualities and he is now enshrined in the temple of every human heart and his life and deeds are read and re-read with high esteem.

Let us bow in obeisance to him.

नमः रामाय रामभद्राय रामचन्द्राय वेधसे।
रघुनाथाय नाथाय सीतायाः पतये नमः॥



The Śabarī Episode in the Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa

—Dr. Mukunda Pati Tripathi

The Śabarī episode is one of the finest episodes of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It is a unique example of Rāma's *Bhāvagrāhitā* (the quality of recognising the cordial emotions of the devotees) and Śabarī's *Rāmaprema Vihvalatā* (the state of ecstasy in ardent love for Śrī Rāma). It bears testimony to the statement—

"Devotion wafts the mind above
Heaven descends itself in love."

Almost all the exponents of the *Rāma-Kathā* have dwelt meticulously upon this topic but the delineation of this episode in the *Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa* is superb one. The author of this *Rāmāyaṇa* has dealt with this event in detail (extending from *Adhyāya* 166 to 172). He has given a new dimension to this story by making some innovations. He has not put a full stop to this story at the point of Rāma's accepting her hospitality and explaining *Navadhā Bhakti* (nine types of devotion) to her. It records the reaction of the *Śrotriya Brāhmaṇas* of the forest at this event, the outrage of nature upon them, their miserable lot, their prayer to Rāma for pardoning their sins and their ultimate surrender to the feet of Śabarī.

The author has put stress upon the following aspects in this episode—

(1) Rāma can ignore all sorts of *Tapa, Japa, Yoga* and *Jñāna Sādhanā* but he cannot help giving response to *Bhakti*.

(2) He is compassionate enough over each and every devotee regardless of caste, creed, time and clime.

(3) He can bear His insult but He can never bear the insult of His devotees.

(4) The real purity and worth of any offering lies in love and not in the object—"प्रेम्णि हि वसन्ति गुणानि न वस्तुषु". The story runs like this—while marching ahead in search for Sītā Rāma approaches the *Āśrama* of Mātaṅga *Ṛṣi*. Listening to the news of His arrival in the forest all the *Tapasvīs, Brahmavettās, Brahmacārīs* stand up toe upon their heels to greet Him. But to their utter dismay, Rāma takes care of none. He hastens to the hut of Śabarī. He is eager enough to see her. The poet has given a penpicture of Śabarī in these terms—

आस्ते दूराद्वीक्ष्यमाणा रामस्यागमनं पथि।
अकुण्ठोत्कण्ठया पूर्णा पुलकाञ्चितविग्रहा॥
क्षणं बहिः क्षणं मध्ये वेश्म तिष्ठन्त्युदाशया।

(2. 167. 9)

She has been gazing and gazing at the way of Śrī Rāma. Out of restlessness, sometimes she goes in, sometimes she comes out and sometimes she stays still on the midway. She has gathered various sorts of fruits, nuts, flowers and leaves for Him. She has gathered red, yellow, green, sweet and sour fruits. She has gathered tender leaves for His bed, she has gathered beautiful flowers for His garland. She has tasted and retasted fruits before preserving them for feasting Rāma—"परीक्षार्थं समास्वाद्य मिष्टानि जगृहेतमाम्।" (भु०रा० 167. 22).

She has kept the fruits in charming plates of leaves—"मनोज्ञपत्रपात्रेषु रक्षितानि प्रयत्नतः" (2. 166.13). She has woven garlands of all sorts of lotus and placed them on His cot—"मालाकृतानि रम्याणि शय्यायां निहितानि च" (2.166 . 20). Completing all sorts of preparations in the hut, she keeps constant watch over the out door. Aware of all these Śrī Rāma says—"Dear Lakṣmaṇa! Look yonder. Our devotee, Śabarī, has been waiting for our arrival for long."

At the very first glance of Śrī Rāma, Śabarī delves deep into the ocean of bliss like a *Yogī,* experiencing the ecstasy of self-realisation.

तमागतं सुन्दरमात्मनाथं विलोक्य सम्यक् शबरीक्षणाभ्याम्।
अगाहतानन्द समुद्रमन्तर्योगी यथा स्वात्मसुखानुभूत्या॥
(भु० रा० 167. 1)

She says—

Come on lord, come on in. My hut has been sanctified by your arrival—

त्वय्यागते त्रिभुवनाभिमतं गृहं मे पूर्णा मनोरथततिर्निखिलार्थदातः।
(भु० रा० 2. 167. 3)

"I have been hearing of your beauty for long. I have been dreaming of it all the time. All my dreams have come true." She leads Him to the inner apartments of the house. She offers him *Pādya, Ācamanīya, Arghya, Snānīya* (water for washing feet, hands, mouth and bathing). Washing His feet well, she massages them and utters words full of love. She brings various fruits, nuts and vegetables of sweet, sour and tasty varieties. She has arranged them in various plates of leaves—

मधुराणि तथाम्लानि मधुराम्लानि भूरिशः।
स्वादूनि फलमूलानि भर्त्रे भूयांस्युपाहरत्॥
(2. 166. 11)

Śrī Rāma eats up every fruit, full of appreciation and satisfaction—

शश्लाघे प्रतिकवलं रघुप्रवीरो भुञ्जानोऽमृतरस भाञ्जिसत्फलानि।
(भु० रा० द० 167. 16)

Rasagrāhī Rāma eats some and offers others to Lakṣmaṇa—"स्वदमानो रसग्राही स्वादयंश्च प्रियानुजम्।" (2. 167. 17).

Śabarī has spared no pains to ascertain that the fruits that are going to be offered to Śrī Rāma are delicious ones—"परीक्षार्थं समास्वाद्य मिष्टानि जगृहेतमाम्" (भु० रा० 167.20). She has tasted and retasted the fruits so that no bitter fruit might disgust and disturb Rāma.

Āsvādavicakṣaṇa (expert in tasting) Rāma thanks Śabarī again and again. He expounds His principle—

नाहं तृप्यामि शबरि मन्त्रपूतै रसावहैः।
द्विजप्रदत्तैर्भूयोऽभिरन्नैः सुस्वादुभोजनैः॥

यथा तृप्यामि मद्भक्तैर्भक्त्या समुपकल्पितैः।
पत्रैः शाकैः फलैर्मूलैर्यथावदुपसञ्चितैः॥

(भु० रा० 167. 25-26)

"O Śabarī! I do not feel so much satisfied with sweet and delicious fruits offered to me with *Mantras* by *Brāhmaṇas* as I feel with the fruits, nuts and vegetables collected carefully and offered with love."

The novel point of this episode in this *Rāmāyaṇa* is that the sages and Muni's of the forest decry Rāma's behaviour.They take it as violation of *Śīla, Prajñā, Kula* and *Kriyā* (good conduct, wisdom, family tradition and action— ''अहो शीलमहो प्रज्ञा अहो कुलमहो क्रिया'' (2.169.12). They denounce Śabarī too. *Antaryāmī* Rāma feels offended. Nemesis begins. The water of the river of their *Āśrama* gets polluted and vitiated. It becomes blood-stained. Various types of vermins and insects abound in it. The sages plunge into utter dismay. All their religious rites and rituals are at stake—

नित्यस्नानक्रियास्तेषां प्रतिबद्धास्तदाभवन्।
अकस्माद् रक्तवाहिन्यां जातायां सरिति क्षणात्॥

(2. 169. 22)

They seek the help of sage *Agastya* who reveals the secret of this epidemic as the insult of Śabarī. Under the leadership of him, the *Brāhmaṇas* rush to Śrī Rāma who advises them to beg pardon of Śabarī. The ashamed *Brāhmaṇas* pray to her—

अजानता जानता वा यत्ते केनापि किञ्चन।
अपराद्धमभून्मातस्तत्त्वं क्षन्तुमर्हसि॥

(2. 172. 7)

They say—"O compassionate mother, kindly shower your blessings over us. Even Lord Rāma is under the spell of your devotion. How can we, frail creatures, sing your glory. Forgive our sins committed consciously or unconsciously. Śabarī instantly consoles the *Brāhmaṇas*. She falls down at the feet of sage *Agastya*. According to his advice, she steps in the *Āśrama* of

the *Ṛṣis.* A fresh lease of life permeates thereat. Sweet breeze begins to blow. The moment she washes her feet in the river, it assumes the former, freshness, the trees of the *Āśrama* become laden with green leaves, sprouts and fruits. Ponds assume a new charm with the sight of dancing lotuses.

A thorough inspection of the narrative makes us feel that the *Siddha, Siddha-Sammata, Vijñānavatī, Śabarī* of the *Ādikavi* (3. 74. 10. 19) has become more illustrious, more emotional and more devoted in the *Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa.* She becomes 'तीर्थपावनपावनी' (2. 168. 11). The *Ādikavi* does not mention her caste but the *Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa* clearly calls her *Bhillajātīya, Śabar Sundarī, Kirātī* "अधमा कर्मणा जात्या मांसगृध्नुः किरातजा" (भु० रा० 2. 170. 5).

The *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* simply mentions that she offered wild fruits and nuts to Śrī Rāma—"मया तु सञ्चितं वन्यं विचित्रं पुरुषर्षभ" (वा०रा० 3. 74. 70). He keeps silent at the question of the fruits being tasted by Śabarī beforehand. The *Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa* clearly asserts that Śabarī had sorted out good, sweet fruits for Rāma after tasting and retasting them. She has been shown repenting for it too—

अपराधमहं चक्रे स्वोच्छिष्टविनिवेदनात्।
प्रेममत्तमतिः किञ्चिन्न विचारितवत्यपि॥

(भु०रा०द० 168. 6)

Rāma assures her of her actions' propriety. As to the name of the fruits she offered to Śrī Rāma, the general belief is that they were berries. In the Assamiya tradition they are presented to be mangoes Rāma eats only those mangoes which bear the seal of Śabarī's teeth. In the *Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa* the list of fruits suggests a great variety—

अम्लानि लवणाक्तानि वुभुजे रघुनन्दनः।

(2. 167. 96)

There is an annexure of nuts too—

कन्दानि पावकभ्रष्टान्यनेकानि वनेचरी।
रसभेदप्रभिन्नानि कल्पयामास तत्पुरः॥

(2. 167. 18)

Vālmīki mentions that after meeting Rāma she puts an end to her journey of life, by producing *Yogāgni* and taking *Samādhi*. The author of the *Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa* records her as alive and active even after meeting Rāma. She removes the misery of the *Brāhmaṇas* and the disorder prevailing in their *Āśramas*.

Thus the *Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa's* presentation of Śabarī is more appealing, eventful, dramatic and suggestive of the priority of devotion over *Varṇa Vyavasthā* and *Jñāna Sādhanā*.



चौ०—निज गुन श्रवन सुनत सकुचाहीं। पर गुन सुनत अधिक हरषाहीं॥
सम सीतल नहिं त्यागहिं नीती। सरल सुभाउ सबहि सन प्रीती॥१॥
जप तप ब्रत दम संजम नेमा। गुरु गोबिंद बिप्र पद प्रेमा॥
श्रद्धा छमा मयत्री दाया। मुदिता मम पद प्रीति अमाया॥२॥
बिरति बिबेक बिनय बिग्याना। बोध जथारथ बेद पुराना॥
दंभ मान मद करहिं न काऊ। भूलि न देहिं कुमारग पाऊ॥३॥

"They blush to hear themselves praised but feel much delighted to hear others' praises. Even-minded and placid, they never abandon the right course. Guileless by nature and loving, they are given over to prayer, austerity, control of the senses, self-denial and religious observances and undertake sacred vows. They are devoted to the feet of their *Guru*, Lord Govinda (Viṣṇu) and the Brahmans. They are full of piety, forgiving, friendly to all, compassionate, cheerful under all circumstances and sincerely devoted to My feet. They are further characterized by dispassion, discretion, modesty, knowledge of the truth relating to God as well as by a correct knowledge of the *Vedas* and *Purāṇas*. They never take recourse to hypocrisy, pride or arrogance nor set their foot on the evil path even by mistake.

—*Mānasa*

The Rāmāyaṇa

—Jules Michelet

The year 1863 will always be to me dear and blessed, for in it I was privileged to read for the first time the great sacred poem of India—the divine *Rāmāyaṇa.*

"When this poem was first sung, Brahmā Himself was ravished with it. Gods, geniuses, all beings from birds to serpents, men and holy anchorites exclaimed, "Oh! The sweet poem which we would always gladly hear. Oh! Enrapturing song! How it imitates nature! How clearly we see this long history! It lives under our very eyes."

"Happy he who reads this book entire. Happy he who has read but the half of it. It makes the *Brāhmaṇa* wise, the soldier brave, the merchant rich. If, by chance, a slave (Pariah) hears it, he becomes ennobled. He who reads the *Rāmāyaṇa* is absolved from all his sins."

This last expression is no delusion of the fancy. This great stream of poetry sweeps away our abiding siṇ; the dregs, the bitter leaven, which time brings and leaves in us, it washes away and thus makes us pure. Whoever feels his heart dry let him drink of the *Rāmāyaṇa.* Whoever has lost what was dear to him and is plunged in sorrow let him draw from it the sweet comforts and sympathies of nature. Whoever has laboured too much and wished too much, let him drink from this cup a deep draught of life and youth.

Man cannot always work. Every year he must rest, take breath, and renew himself at the great living springs which preserve their eternal freshness. But where are these to be found

except at the cradle of our race—on the sacred summits whence descend on one side the Indus and the *Gaṅgā,* and on the other the torrents of Persia, the rivers of Paradise?

Everything is narrow in the west. Greece is so small that I am stifled, in it; Judea is so dry that I pant in it. Let me glance at the side of high Asia towards the deep Orient. There I have my immense poem as vast as the Indian Sea blessed and adorned by the sun—a book of divine harmony, where nothing jars. A calm peace pervades it, and even in the midst of battle described in it we perceive an infinite sweetness, a boundless brotherhood, which extends to every living thing; an ocean without bottom or shore, full of love, pity and clemency. I have found that for which I was looking—the Bible of goodness. Receive me then, great poem, Let me plunge in thee, O Sea of milk.

It is only quite recently that the whole of this poem has been translated. It has always been judged by an isolated part or an interpolated episode, directly contrary to its spirit. Now that it has appeared in all its truth and grandeur, it is easy to see that whoever was its last compiler, it is the outgrowth of India—the product of its ages. During perhaps two thousand years the Hindu gave utterance to the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the different songs and recitals which constitute this epic; and for the last two thousand years they have enacted it in the popular dramas, which were and are still represented at the great national festivals.

It is not a mere poem. It is a kind of Bible which, with the sacred traditions, contains nature, society, the arts, the Indian scenery, vegetation, animals, and the changes of the year in the peculiar enchantments of the different seasons. We cannot judge such a book as we would the *Iliad.* It has never undergone those expurgations and corrections to which the Homeric poems have been subjected by the great critics of Greece, the greatest of the world. It has had no Antiarchus. It comes to us unaltered. We see this in its numerous repititions and in some of its descriptions, which recur two or three times and even oftener.

We see this also in the many additions which have been made to it at sundry times. Here we meet with facts of such antiquity as to reach back to the cradle of India, and again with things comparatively modern and of such delicate sweetness and fine melody as would seem to be Italian.

It has not been arranged with that skill which characterises the literary works of the West. No one has taken such trouble with it. Everyone has relied on the unity, which such an immense diversity receives from vague harmony in which the shades, the colours and even the opposite tunes are blended. It is like the forest and the mountain which it describes. Under gigantic trees, there is a superabundant life, which springs up from smaller trees and from an infinitude of shrubs and humbler plants, which those woodgiants permit to exist under them, and over which they pour down their showers of blossoms; and these great vegetable amphitheatres are full of life. On high soar and flutter birds of a hundred kinds and colours; apes swing from the immediate branches, and now and then the mild-eyed gazette is seen beneath. Is this totally a chaos? By no means the agreeing diversities deck themselves with a commingling charm. At evening, when the sun extinguishes his overwhelming light in the Gaṅgā, when the noises of life are silent, the skirt of the forest exhibits all this animation, so diverse and yet so well blended in the peace of the sweetest twilight, in whice all things love each other and sing together. A common melody emerges. This is the *Rāmāyaṇa*.



ईदृशैस्त्वं समाचारैर्यशोऽर्थकुलनाशनैः। धर्षणं प्राणिनां ज्ञात्वा स्वमतेन विचेष्टसे॥

"Acting according to your own sweet will, you knowingly commit offence against living beings through such practices, which ruin your fame and fortune and bring a blot on your family."

(*V. R.*)

Raghuvaṁśam

—*Prof. Purna Chandra Ojha*

Raghuvaṁśam is admittedly the last and therefore the matured work of Kālidāsa, the representative of India's spirit, grace and genius. Kālidāsa has thrown no stone to be unturned in this magnificent masterpiece. It is one of the greatest epics *(Mahākāvyas)* of Sanskrit literature consisting of nineteen cantos where there is vivid description of 29 kings of solar dynasty. The list of solar-kings, as we see, differs from *Purāṇa* to *Purāṇa*. In narrating the story of Rāmacandra and his ancestors in *Raghuvaṁśam,* though Kālidāsa has followed *Rāmāyaṇa* closely almost in all respects, his list of solar-kings does not agree with the list given by Vālmīki but agrees more with the list given both in *Vāyu* and *Viṣṇu purāṇas* with a slight difference and this may be accepted as being historically true. Giving the list of 29 kings of solar-race, *Raghuvaṁśam* begins with the virtuous king Dilīpa and ends with the voluptuous king Agnivarṇa who died without issue.

The name *'Raghuvaṁśam'* of the epic itself seems to have been borrowed by the poet from the *Rāmāyaṇa* where it occurs twice as रघुवंशस्य चरितं चकार भगवान्मुनिः and अहं च रघुवंशस्य लक्ष्मणश्च महाबलः

But here question arises that why did Kālidāsa name his poem *'Raghuvaṁśam'* after the king Raghu but not after all other 28 kings. He could have named it after the most powerful kings of solar race like Dilīpa, Daśaratha, Aja, Rāma etc. Even it could have been named after Dilīpa, the first king of the poem or might have been named after Agnivarṇa being the last. Also it could have been better and wise to name the poem (epic)

after Rāma, the most eminent and popular king of solar dynasty, and the deeds and story of whom have been described in six cantos by the poet himself in *Raghuvaṁśam.*

The *Kāvyas,* according to Indian rhetoricians, should be named after the main characters like the hero or heroine or both of them or the poet himself or the main fact or subject matter of the poem *(Kāvya).*

"Raghuvaṁśam" of Kālidāsa is one of the great epics *(Mahākāvyas)* of Sanskrit literature and Kālidāsa thought it authentic to name it after Raghu, the main character or the hero of this *Kāvya* (Poem). Raghu is the greatest and the best of all other kings of solar-race enumerated in the *Kāvya* artistically.

Really, from Raghu, the seed of his dynasty has been sown as Kālidāsa mentions. Raghu has laid the foundation stone of his race. Dilīpa, the first king of his line, has no issue at all for which he had to practise a great vow in attending upon Nandinī, the daughter of Surabhi, the divine-cow in the hermitage of sage Vasiṣṭha, as a result of which he was bestowed with a boon by Nandinī to have a son like Raghu, the most illustrious of his line. So the poet said:

ततः समानीय स मानितार्थी
हस्तौ स्वहस्तार्जित वीरशब्दः।
वंशस्य कर्त्तारमनन्तकीर्त्तिं
सुदक्षिणायां तनयं ययाचे॥

No doubt that Rāma was a good and noble king. He was a good ruler and lover of his subjects but Raghu was the most illustrious for which even Rāmacandra the befitting successor of Raghu is more often known as 'रघुपति, रघुनाथ, राघव, रघुनन्दन, रघुकुलतिलक' and the like. Raghu was a good ruler who became the burning example for his successors. His merits as a ruler can be seen in Canto-IV of *Raghuvaṁśam'* as:

स हि सर्वस्य लोकस्य युक्तदण्डतया मनः।
आददे नातिशीतोष्णो नभस्वानिव दक्षिणः॥

मदोत्कण्ठाः कृतास्तेन गुणाधिकतया गुरौ।
फलेन सहकारस्य पुष्पोद्गम इव प्रजाः॥
नयविद्भिर्नवे राज्ञि सदसच्चोपदर्शितम्।
पूर्व एवाभवत्पक्षस्तस्मिन्नाभवदुत्तरः॥
पंचानामपि भूतानामुत्कर्षं पुपुषुर्गुणाः।
नवे तस्मिन्महीपाले सर्वं नवमिवाभवत्॥
यथा प्रह्लादनाच्चन्द्रः प्रतापात्तपनो यथा।
तथैव सोऽभूदन्वर्थो राजा प्रकृतिरंजनात्॥
कामं कर्णान्तविश्रान्ते विशाले तस्य लोचने।
चक्षुष्मता तु शास्त्रेण सूक्ष्मकार्यार्थदर्शिना॥

Rāma is called प्रजानुरंजक राजा—During his regime his subjects were pleased. He had done a lot for them but he had never tried to expand his empire which is one of the most important merits of a full-fledged and a perfect king as mentioned in *"Gautama-Dharma-Sūtra"*. But in case of Raghu, he brought the whole of India under his sway. His invasion was victorious and glorious. So M.R. Kāle remarks in his case "...... It would appear that he was the first prince of his race who undertook and brought to a successful termination, this wide, arduous and glorious campaign of universal conquest; and that is perhaps one reason why he came to be regarded as the greatest of his race, since doubtless a king who first brought a whole country under one *'Chatra'* could not have failed to win universal applause and approbation.

Raghu was a great warrior. His intrepid bravery won him the admiration of Indra, the redoubtable king of immortals with whom also Raghu had a frightful combat. He was a righteous and virtuous conqueror who took away the wealth but not the territories of other kings even of Mahendra who was first made captive but afterwards released. So the poet said:

गृहीतप्रतिमुक्तस्य स धर्मविजयी नृपः।
श्रियं महेन्द्रनाथस्य जहार न तु मेदिनीम्॥

Raghu was a great giver. Having given away all his wealth

to Brahmins in a sacrifice, he had become a pauper, so much so that even the utensils in his household were earthen and not of gold. Suffering from poverty, he even did not turn away Kautsa, a sage, who came to him for money. He fulfilled his desire. The God of wealth showered down gold. He insisted the sage to take all the golds, the more that he wanted as it was gained for him. Here M.R. Kāle remarks, "The incident reveals the highest type of selfless nobility in a king, illustrating the complete harmony between enjoyment and renunciation (भोग and त्याग)."

A story runs that why सूर्यवंश, afterwards, was known as रघुवंश but not as रामवंश. The story follows:

One day, in Ayodhya, being engaged in a discussion, Sītā describing plights that both Rāma and she, herself faced; proposed to name their race as रामवंश instead of रघुवंश. Rāma heard Sītā and wanted Vasiṣṭha to decide the matter if it is genuine. So, alongwith Sītā, he met Vasiṣṭha and told the matter. Vasiṣṭha remained silent for a moment and told the couple an anecdote on Raghu as follows:

On one occasion Raghu alongwith his wife Vidyāvatī visited the गुरुकुल-महाविद्यालय of Gautama, a famous sage, while his disciples were reciting the hymns of the Goddess Mahā Sarasvatī with great devotion. After spending there some hours, the couple returned to Ayodhya being blessed by the sage. During their stay in the महाविद्यालय certain young *Brahmacārī* named Candramā was enamoured by the peerless beauty of Vidyāvatī and was love-striken. Gautama could know Candramā's heart and informed Raghu the fact. The king without any reaction and hesitation ventilated it to his pious and sacrosanct wife Vidyāvatī. She also sought Raghu's counsel. Raghu remained silent but gave her consent to give herself to Candramā.

On a scheduled day, the disciple Candramā came. Raghu paid homage and took him to the harem where the queen waited for him being put on good attire. But what happened! Candramā

saw her as if she used to see Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning infront of him. He fell at the feet of the queen and prayed reciting the hymn of Sarasvatī. The queen, as if his mother, blessed him. The disciple returned to his *Guru* Gautama. *Guru* could know everything and declared him to be the great disciple and said he had achieved his goal.

The disciple Candramā was a great knower of the *Vedas.* He remained celibate all through his life (आजन्म ब्रह्मचारी) and his fame spread all over the world.

Raghu kept his word and kept up the prestige of the solar dynasty. His fame remained unstunk and he was known as the emperor of emperors (एकराट् or छत्रपति).

Sītā was surprised hearing this story from sage Vasiṣṭha and understood the true internal meaning of it. Her rodomontade of giving the race the name as *Rāmavaṁśa* vanished from his mind and she said "Let the race as it is, be named after Raghu, the true emperor and the only—moon of the solar dynasty.

So, taking into account all the merits of Rāghu, Kālidāsa named his world famous poem (epic) as *Raghuvaṁśam* and he himself was entitled as *Raghukāra.*



पूषन्नेकर्षे यम सूर्य प्राजापत्य
व्यूह रश्मीन् समूह तेजः।
यत्ते रूपं कल्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि
योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि॥

"O thou who art the nourisher, the solitary traveller, the controller, the acquirer, the son of Prajāpati, do remove thy rays, do gather up thy dazzle. I shall behond by thy grace that form of thine which is most benign. I am that very Person that is yonder (in the Sun)."

—*Īśopaniṣad* (16)

Divya Deśas Associated with Śrī Rāmāyaṇa

—Dr. Smt. Rangamani Sampath

We are not lucky enough to take birth during the period of Śrī Rāmāvatāra and live in the kingdom of the great hero of the Solar dynasty. In *Kaliyuga,* we live in the most advanced materialistic world surrounded by evil all around merged in the dirty water of endless worldly pursuits. Where is the opportunity of worshipping Śrī Rāma, the ideal personification of Śrī Viṣṇu (विभवावतार) full of virtues and valour as a ruler and the model man in this world.

It is difficult for the normal man to worship the lotus feet of lord Viṣṇu in *Paramapadam* (परमपदम्) (the superior world of tranquillity and peace) nor in His *Vyūha* State (व्यूहवैभव) in the ocean of milk. To realise Him in His *Vyakta Avyakta* forms is also difficult for the common man. So the only way left to us is to worship His *Arcāvatāra.* It is not an exaggeration if I say that the *Darśana* of the *Arcāmūrti* of Lord Viṣṇu as Śrī Rāma, or Śrī Kṛṣṇa or Lord Narasiṁha and the like can give us as much mental bliss and perfect satisfaction as if we have seen Him personally and realised Him. Therefore, we have to visit the temples and holy pilgrimage centres maintained by our ancestors where idol worship (worship of अर्चामूर्ति) is still celebrated.

In this connection, I would like to point out that the 108 *Divya Deśas* throughout Bhāratavarṣa propitiated by the ancient Āzhwārs of Dravida Deśa pave an easy way to salvation. Some of the 108 *Divya Deśas* are in association with Śrī Rāma, the important events and characters of *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa.* Even today, in these places Rāma is worshipped in shrines in different

postures as per the relevant occasion and atmosphere of *Śrī Rāmāyaṇa*. The walls of most of these temples are decorated with good artistic sculptures or paintings depicting the events of *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa,* inspiring us to feel the very spirit—atmosphere—of the same and participate in it. A practical knowledge of these *Divya Deśas* would be of immense help to devotees to visit these places.

There are several *Tīrthas* (तीर्थ) and *Kṣetras* (क्षेत्रा:) throughout India associated with Śrī Rāma and more in South India where Rāma lived during His exile from Ayodhya. I am giving a brief account of the same in this article. Ālzwārs like Śrīkulaśekara, Perīalwār (विष्णुचित्त) and Tirumaṅgai Ālzwār (परकाल) have propitiated Śrī Rāma's shrine in TiruAyodhi (the birth place of Śrī Rāma)—the temple with a superstructure known as *Puṣkala Vimāna,* on the banks of river Sarayū with a tank adjoining it named as (परमपद सत्य पुष्करिणी) *Paramapada Satya Puṣkariṇī* in a sitting posture facing North, manifesting Himself to Bharata and others, *Devas* and sages. But at present, this temple is not seen; pilgrims worship a picture in His birthplace (जन्मस्थान) and in *Ammājī Mandira* on the right bank of river Sarayū, four Kilometres from the Gupta Ghāta (गुप्त घाट) where Rāma got down in the river at the end of His *Avatāra*. This temple is in the South Indian style and the site is located as the one where the kings of solar dynasty had installed their family deity (कुलदेव). Śrī Raṅganātha and worshipped Him. On the right bank of Sarayū, there is a temple of Śrī Hanumān known as Hanumān Tekari. The palace of Śrī Rāma, Kanaka Bhavana is still well-maintained where pilgrims feel the presence of Śrī Rāma and his circle even today.

In far south, pilgrims going to Rameswaram cannot miss the famous *Divya Deśas* known in Tamil as "Thiruppullani", also called as *"Darbhaśayanam"* (दर्भशयनम्), *Ādi Setu* (आदिसेतु) etc. According to *Rāmāyaṇa,* before the war with Rāvaṇa, Rāma was lying in this place in His Yogic trance on a bed of *Darbha*

grass contemplating the building of a bridge to Lanka. Disturbed by the boisterous bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean, He drew a line with his bow on the water and the tumultuous waves calmed down. This sacred place is considered all the more sublime because Rāma gave *Śaraṇāgati* to five persons namely Śuka (शुक) Sāraṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa, the king of ocean and his queen who sought refuge at His feets.

This can be seen in the Sanctum Sanctorum (गर्भ गृह) of this temple. The *Mūlava Mūrti* (मूलव मूर्ति) of this shrine is really very marvellous. Śrī Rāma is reposing on *Darbha* grass, Lakṣmaṇa, the incarnation of Śrī Ādi Śeṣa serving as His couch and umbrella; Rāma is having His royal sword but not the Discus and the conch as he had left them at Ayodhya in the form of Bharata and Śatrughna. The lotus emerging from His navel contains the entire universe besides Brahmā; the Sun, the Moon, Madhu (मधु) and Kaiṭabha (कैटभ) Śrī Lakṣmī Devī, *Suṇḍobha Suṇḍhas,* sages and all-the thirty three crores of *Devas* are found above. Mārkaṇḍeya and Garuḍa are found below seated at the head while Śuka, Sāraṇa and Bhṛgu are seated at his feet. Śrī Hanumān is standing in reverence at a distance. Vibhīṣaṇa with folded hands is found on the Southern side of the *Ardhamaṇḍapa* (अर्धमण्डप) while the king of the Indian ocean (रत्नाकर) and the queen (महोदधि) (Bay of Bengal) are seated in the North. The very sight of this *Arcā Mūrti* gives immediate salvation. About two, three Kilometres from here is *Ādi Setu Tīrtha* (आदि सेतु तीर्थ) where pilgrims go to bathe. Before bathing, they draw the figure of Rāma's bow on the sea sand with the help of *Darbha* grass, make certain vows (संकल्प) and worship it with flowers and prostrate before the reminiscents of the bridge constructed by the monkey Nala (नलसेतु) seen at a distance. This *Kṣetra* is worshipped more specially because it is considered to have existed even before Rāma's birth when Daśaratha did *Yāga* (पुत्रेष्टि) worshipped Lord Jagannātha Swāmī in this temple and Śrī Santāna Gopāla Swāmī for progeny.

Further details about these shrines can be had from (श्रीमद्वेङ्कटरमणीयम्).

Tirumangai Ālzwār, in his "*Periya Tirumozhi* in the *Nālayira Divya Prabhandham* had propitiated Śrī Rāma in the *Kṣetra* "Thiru Pullamphoodangudi about 10 Kms. from Kumbakonam in Tamil Nadu State. This place is associated with *Jaṭāyu-parimokṣa* (जटायुपरिमोक्ष). In this *Kṣetra,* Rāma is in a reclining pose (भुजङ्गशयनम्) resting under the *Punnāga* tree after cremating Jaṭāyu. The holy water (तीर्थ) here is called (गृध्रतीर्थ) or (जटायुतीर्थ) and Rāma as *Valvilli* Rāma (धनुर्धर). The superstructure of the shrine is *Śobhana Vimānam.*

Rāma is also worshipped as *Kolavaḷvi* Rāma, (धनुर्धर) and (शृङ्गारसुन्दर) in Thiruvelliangudi (शुक्रपुरी) near Kumbakonam in a shrine with *Puṣkalāvarta Vimānam* (पुष्कलावर्त). Śrī Rāma, is in reclining pose, *Pratyakṣa* to Śukra, Brahmā, Parāśara, Indra and Maya (मय) who did penance here and got His *Darśana* and blessings. The tanks are named after them as शुक्रतीर्थ, ब्रह्म, पराशर, इन्द्र, मय तीर्थ. There is the puranic allusion that Śukra got back his eye which He lost during Viṣṇu's *Vāmanāvatāra* during Mahābali's *Yāga.* At the instigation of Mārkaṇḍeya, Maya built this temple and Indra who got back his kingdom after doing penance here, renovated this temple. Tirumangai Ālzwār has praised Śrī Rāma here as *Kodaṇḍa Rāma* (कोदण्ड राम) with His powerful bow. The peculiarity in this temple is the icon of Garuḍa with the conch and discus in his hands. The *Darśana* of Śrī Rāma in this shrine gives the benefit of worship in all the 108 *Divya Deśas.*

Tirumalai Tiruppathi in Andhra Pradesh, is one of the places where Rāma stayed in the south during his exile. The *Utsava* idols of Śrī Rāma, Śrī Sītā, Śrī Lakṣmaṇa and Śrī Hanumān are installed in the shrine on the hill and in Tiruppati East, there is a separate temple of Śrī Rāma built by sage Rāmānuja with good sculptures presenting the important characters of *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa.* There is a sculpture of Añjanā Devī, Mother of Hanumān, playing the *Vīṇā* in her hands, thereby signifying

that Hanumān inherited from her a fine taste for music. There is the hill known as Añjanādri, the birth place of Hanumān.

Madurāntakam in Chenglepet District is about 50 Kms. from Madras where Rāma is worshipped as *"Yeri Katha Rāma"* (Rāma who protected the lake) due to a mysterious historical event connected with this place. In *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa,* it is alluded as the place where Rāma stayed for some time in the hermitage of sage Śrī Vibhāṇḍaka (विभाण्डक ऋषि) and while flying up to Ayodhya after fourteen Years alighted here to keep up His promise to the sage. Historically, during the British rule. The district collector colonel Blace had the *Divya Darśana* (दिव्य दर्शन) of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa here. There is a lake extending to 13 square miles behind the temple. During the rainy season, there was always the danger for the town and the temple being submerged in the lake water. In spite of the annual maintenance of the breaches of the lake, the danger could not be overcome. The Collector promised to construct a temple for Sītā Devī provided Rāma could save the town from the flood. Out of curiosity, he proceeded during the rainy midnight to the place where he found two persons with bow and arrow guarding the same. It so happened, the bund was found quite safe in the next morning. The Collector kept up his word, built a temple for Sītā Devī named as Janakavallī and contributed some jewels to her. Thus Rāma got the name *"Yeri Katha Rāma"* (Rāma, who saved the lake). The speciality of this temple is the *Vakula* Tree, the *Sthalavṛkṣa* (स्थलवृक्ष) under which Rāmānuja got initiation from his *Guru* Mahā pūrṇa Nambi. The temple is calm and serene with beautiful icons of Rāma, Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān.

In Thirupputkuzhi near Kancheepuram, Rāma is named as Vijaya Rāghava, *Pratyakṣam* to Jaṭāyu, Sītā as *Maragatharalli.* The temple is adorned by *Vijayakoṭi Vimāna.* Rāma is in a sitting pose facing east. The speciality of the temple is, still there is a traditional belief that a childless woman will get a child if she ties fried gram in her waist and spends a day in Sītā's shrine

and finds it sprouting the next day. Vedānta Deśika sings Rāma here as the great warrior, *Samarapuṅgava.* (समरपुङ्गव).

Tiruvalloor known in sanskrit as (दीक्षारण्य) is another *Divya Deśa* near Madras where Rāma is Consecrated as Vīra Rāghava. Sītā as Kanakavallī-Vasumatī. The temple has a *Vimānam* (विजयकोटिविमानम्) and a tank *Hṛttāpanāśinī* (हृत्तापनाशिनी). A dip in this tank, particularly on a new Moonday is said to remove all diseases, Vīra Rāghava is in the reclining pose facing east.

In South India, the *Divya Deśas* Srirangam, Kumbakonam, Vaduvoor, Thillai Thiruchittrakootam, Thiruvallikkeni, Thiru Near Malai etc. are associated with Śrī Rāma. In Srirangam the first and foremost of the 108 *Divya Deśas,* Śrī Kodaṇḍa Rāma's temple is constructed by *Rāmabhakta* Kulaśekhara Ālzwār (कुलशेखर) king of Pandya *Deśa* and Kutta Nadu (Present Kerala), near the tank (चन्द्रपुष्करिणी). The icons are majestic with merciful looks in serene atmosphere. There is also a *"Paṭṭābhi Rāma"* shrine near by.

There is also a temple in the heart of Kumbokanam town for Śrī Rāmaswāmī where the *Arcā Mūrtis* of Rāma and his *Parivāra* (परिवार) are enchantingly beautiful. In the circumambulation (प्राकार) of this temple the walls contain fine paintings depicting the full story of *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa.* About 16 miles from Tanjore on the bus route to Mannargudi is Veduvoor one of the places where Rāma stayed, (वकुलारण्यम्). The idols of Śrī Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Śrī Sītā Devī, Hanumān etc. are very artistic and beautiful here.

Chidambaram on the main line of South Indian Railways from Madras to Trichinopoly Corresponds to Citrakūṭam (चित्रकूट) and propitiated by Ālwārs as *Thillai Thiru Chithrakutom.*

In Madras city in the famous shrine of Śrī Pārthasarathi in Thiruvallikkeni (Bṛndāraṇya Kṣetra) Rāma's temple is there and propitiated by Thirumangai Ālzwār, Rāma is *Pratyakṣa* to Śaśapāda sage here. About 20 Kms. from here is *Thiruneer malai* (तोयाचलम्) where in Śrī Raṅganātha's temple, Rāma had been installed and Thirumaṅgaia Ālzwār had sung his praises. Chetty Punyam is one of the places about 4 Kms. from Singa

Perumal Koil where Rāma stayed and about 200 Years ago, a *Vaiśya* woman got inspired in her dream to build the present temple of Śrī Rāma here.

It is believed that unmarried girls who worship Rāma here get married happily. There is also a shrine for Śrī Lakṣmī Hayagrīva (लक्ष्मी हयग्रीव) in this premesis.

The famous Bhadrachalam is a small town on the bank of Godāvarī in Khammam District, Andhra Pradesh. The shrine of Śrī Rāma is located on the mountain forests of Bhadrachalam, 60 miles from Rajmundhry. The surrounding scenery is very beautiful. It is said that Rāma appeared in the dream of a tribal woman Pokal Domaakka and informed her about the existence of his idols at a particular place to be installed. She installed them in an improvised shed but later on Rāmadāsa alias Kopanna, then—Tazildar of that place under Nawāba Tanīśā, built the present temple at a cost of five Lakh Rupees, out of the revenue collections he made and was imprisoned and tortured by the Nawāba for the same. After suffering in jail for twelve Years, Rāmadāsa pleaded before Sītā Devī. Moved by compassion, Rāma with Lakṣmaṇa appeared before the Nāwaba and handed over the revenue collections due; thus released Rāmadāsa from jail. A visit to this shrine is a must. The structure of this temple is in an elevated place as in Kancheepuram (हस्ति शैलम्) exquisite with a wide variety of jewels decorating the idols. Many incidents of *Śrī Rāmāyaṇa* are carved in the walls around.

Nasik, Panchavati associated with Śrī Rāma is situated on the central Railway. The source of Godāvarī is about 18 miles from this place. The five banyan trees (वटवृक्षा:) are here (and hence the name) the place where Lakṣmaṇa cut Śūrpaṇakhā's nose and hence the name Nasik during his exile. Rāma is said to have fought with Khara and Dūṣaṇa in this place. There is a hut here where Rāma had lived and is worshipped by pilgrims as sacred.

Tourist buses and vans are available these days to go on a comfortable pilgrimage to these holy places and worship Śrī Rāma.



The Glory of Rāma's Name

राम जपु, राम जपु, राम जपु, बावरे।
घोर भव-नीर-निधि नाम निज नाव रे॥१॥
एक ही साधन सब रिद्धि-सिद्धि साधि रे।
ग्रसे कलि-रोग जोग-संजम-समाधि रे॥२॥
भलो जो है, पोच जो है, दाहिनो जो, बाम रे।
राम-नाम ही सो अंत सब ही को काम रे॥३॥
जग नभ-बाटिका रही है फलि फूलि रे।
धुवाँ कैसे धौरहर देखि तू न भूलि रे॥४॥
राम-नाम छाड़ि जो भरोसो करै और रे।
तुलसी परोसो त्यागि माँगै कूर कौर रे॥५॥

(*Vinaya-Patrikā* 66)

O Nincompoop!
Do utter Rāma's Name again and again.
For crossing this fierce worldly ocean,
Name Divine is thy safest vessel alone.
Boarding this very boat an aspirant can
Cross this illusive, earthly vast ocean.

Following faithfully the path of Name Divine,
Ṛddhis and *Siddhis* one can surely obtain,
As *Samādhi, Yoga,* temperance and abstinence
Are in the grip of *Kalikāla's* illness.

Whether a man is good or really bad,
Whether a man is quite simple or crooked.
All have to utter God's Name, in the end.
This world of ours is an optical illusion.
Up in the sky it looks like a garden,
Which is flowering, flourishing and fine,
To us, this world looks like a mansion,

Made of short-lived smoke, in addition.
But beware, get not infatuated.

Says Tulasī, shunning the Name Divine,
If a man puts his trust in any other person,
No doubt, he should be called a simpleton,
Who discarding his well laid out food
Goes about begging a mere morsel of food.

—Translated by R. S. Sengar



The Religious Significance of Rāma in Mānasa

—*S. P. Bahadur*

Four aspects of the Rāma symbol—

Śrī Rāmāvatāra was pre-eminent amongst all *Avatāras* of Viṣṇu. In *Rāmāvatāra* the *Nirguṇa* (Formless) Supreme Being graced the earth in *Saguṇa* (Embodied) and *Puruṣottama* (Perfect human) Forms. Tulasīdāsa, comparing the Name of Rāma to *AUM,* added the Holy Name to the integrated symbol of Rama's Divinity.

On the occasion of Rāma's coronation, Sītā revealed the *Nirguṇa* aspect of Rāma to Hanumān:

Know Rāma as *Parabrahma, saccidānanda,* one without a second, free from all limiting factors, beyond ken of senses, Bliss, Changeless, free from *Avidyā,* Omnipresent, *Paramātmā,* the *Ātman* of all.

Hanumānnāṭakam pays tribute to the *Saguṇa* Form of Rāma:

Hope of all welfare, *Kaliyuga's* sins Who ends,
Purer than three worlds' purity; the base of *Mokṣa;*
Strain of Vālmīki's song; *Dharma's Kalpataru's* Seed;
Rāma's Name brings glory here and in Beyond.
Daśaratha's son, Rāvaṇa's foe, Lakṣmaṇa's brother;
Revered, Qualities' Abode, Giver of fortunes
Bliss of Self-knowledge, *Kaliyuga'-* sins redeems,
Lone Shelter, Great, Faultless, Lord Rāma I greet.

In Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, the sage hailed Rāma as *Puruṣottama:* Vālmīki asked: 'Which *Puruṣa* in the world today is talented, heroic, learned in *Dharma,* graceful, upholder of Truth, resolute, performer of good actions, champion of all human beings, learned, mighty, handsome, controlled in mind, abjures wrath,

glorious in deeds, censuring none, whom even the gods fear in battle's fury?' Nārada replied: 'There is such a *Puruṣa* in the Ikṣvāku dynasty, who is famed as Rāma'.

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa declared Rāma's Name to be the effortless means of attaining salvation in *Kaliyuga:*

Like *Kaliyuga* there can be no other age, provided one has faith. Simply singing Rāma's praises one will cross life's cycles.

In *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa* Gosvāmī Tulasidāsa pays obeisance to all the four aspects of *Śrī Rāmāvatāra: Nirguṇa, Saguṇa, Puruṣottama* and the *Name* (of Rāma) which he compares to the *Mantra AUM.*

The Nirguṇa aspect—

Although the predominating theme in *Rāmacaritamānasa* is *Saguṇa* Rāma and devotion to His Holy Feet, obeisance to *Nirguṇa* Divinity is postulated as an integral part of the religion expounded in *Mānasa.*

Lord Śiva himself revealed the *Nirguṇa* aspect of *Śrī Rāmāvatāra* before the Manifestation of Rāma as Kausalyā's Son. When evil perpetuated by Rāvaṇa became unbearable, gods, sages and Mother Earth in the form of a cow appealed to Brahmā to end their woes. Brahmā and Śiva resolved to go to Viṣṇu for his assistance. While they counselled amongst themselves where they could find Hari, Śiva declared: 'Hari is Omnipresent and pervades all alike. He is manifested by love alone.' Brahmā, Śiva, gods, sages and Mother Earth then prayed to Hari.

Later Śiva affirmed that Rāma indeed was the promised Incarnation of Divinity by hailing Rāma as *'Saccidānanda'* when, alongwith Satī, he met Rāma in the forests searching for Sītā.

Pārvatī was also besieged by similar doubts: 'Remove O lord! this great confusion from my mind', she requested Śiva. 'Celebrated sages who discourse on the Ultimate Reality declare Rāma to be Eternal Unborn *Brahma. Vedas* and *Purāṇas* sing of the Glory of Rāma and you also repeat the Name of Rāma

night and day. Is Rāma the same as the son of Avadh's King or some other Eternal, Impersonal and Imperceptible Supreme Being?' Śiva explained: 'There is no difference between *Nirguṇa* and *Saguṇa* Divinity, like water and hailstones are the same in different forms. A devotee's love transforms the Attributeless, Formless, Unperceivable, Unborn Divinity into a *Saguṇa* God of Love. Śrī Rāma is Truth-Consciousness-Bliss and is like the Sun to dispel even the minutest traces of ignorance'. Śiva further explains: 'In this unreal world, sufferings are like pain felt while dreaming that one's head is being severed. The pain ends only on waking. Similarly Rāma's mercy ends sufferings in the world of Illusions. No one has discovered the beginning or end of Rāma. *Vedas* say 'He walks without feet, hears without ears, acts without hands, sees without eyes'; of Whom *Vedas* sing thus and on Whom sages meditate, is none other than Daśaratha's son Divine Rāma Who has taken birth for His devotees'.

Brahmā, the creator in the Hindu Triad, also hailed victorious Rāma after the war of Lanka, as the manifested *Nirguṇa* Divinity.

Rāma met many illustrious sages and *Ṛṣis* during His sojourn in the forests. They were celebrated for their deep knowledge and enlightenment. Each of them paid reverent obeisance to Rāma as *Nirguṇa* Divinity. When Rāma visited Vālmīki *Muni* in his *Āśrama,* the august sage hailed the Descent of *Nirguṇa* Rāma in the world of His *Māyā*. He paid eloquent obeisance to the *Nirguṇa* Divinity of Rāma in the Upaniṣadic context, 'the All Pervading, *Advitīya Deva* contained in the *Antarātman* of all beings, the Witness of the worldly phenomenon, the prompter of all actions, pure, *Nirguṇa* Divinity, Bestower of consciousness in all beings and Who exists in our own hearts'. Vālmīki in his homage to Rāma defines qualities which make human hearts suitable abodes for *Nirguṇa* Rāma:

In Thy form rests Truth Consciousness and Bliss,
For e'er Unchanged, only the wise know this.
A human Form Thou takest for gods and saints,

Like earthly king to speak and act Thou deignst.
Thy earthly Deeds O Rāma when seen or heard,
Perplex the dull, wise are with joy bestirred
Truth is forsooth all what Thou doest or sayst.
Is not an actor true to role he plays?
Lord, Thou askest where to live while I ask Thee in wonder wrought,
I will tell Thee where to live if Thou tellst me where Thou art not.
Hearing the muni's words with deep love laced,
Rāma felt abashed but smiled with gentle grace.
Vālmīki then spoke, his heart with rapture thrilled,
Sweet words as if they were with honey filled:
O Rāma hear now the place Thou may abide
Alongwith Lakṣmaṇa Sītā by Thy side.
Whose ears are like an ocean vast and deep
In which pour in like streams Thy Endless Deeds;
But unfilled still remain, to hear more seek,
Thy Form in their good hearts, Rāma deign to keep.
Whose eyes like *Cātaka* e'er await Thy sight,
Seeking Thy Form like rain drop for delight;
Who oceans, rivers, lakes, for e'er disdains,
For one moment of bliss of Form-like rain;
Their peaceful hearts are for Thee abode meet,
In them with Lakṣmaṇa Sītā take Thy seat. And so on.

After paying homage to Him Vālmīki advised Rāma to spend his days of exile in Chitrakuta. Later Bharata alongwith the queen mothers, Vasiṣtha and others came to Chitrakuta to persuade Rāma to return to Ayodhya. Addressing the assembled people Vasiṣtha reminded them of Rāma's Divinity.

When Rāma left Chitrakuta to proceed deeper into the forests, he paid respects to the august sage Atri. The *Muni* hailed the *Nirguṇa* Divinity of Rāma.

Meeting other *Ṛṣis* and *Munis* on the way, Rāma reached

the *Āśrama* of sage Agastya. Seated in the assembly of sages, each found 'the Lord's face turned towards him'. Sage Agastya eulogised Rāma and his power.

Among the last of the sages who met Rāma in His palace after His coronation were the illustrous Sanaka etc., the four brothers who were liberated althouth embodied as human beings. They hailed Rāma: as formless and with form.

The Saguṇa aspect—

Mānasa analyses the *Nirguṇa* and *Saguṇa* aspects of Divinity and points out the difficulty in comprehending the Incarnated Form as a symbol of Divinity:

The Formless Lord one comprehends, the Form Incarnate puzzling finds,

Deeds of the Lord of Qualities confuse e'en sages' *Munis'* minds.

In *Mānasa Pīyuṣa,* Añjanīnandana Śaraṇa states that the Formless *Nirguṇa* Rāma is readily understood. He is Incomprehensible (Not this! Not this!). All Pervading but Invisible, Eternal and Unborn. It is admittedly difficult to experience the Bliss. Therefore Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa declares that although the Lord's Divinity is known to all, none refrains from describing it. Elsewhere he compares the *Nirguṇa* and *Saguṇa* aspects of Divinity:

Of *Brahma*, *Nirguṇa* and *Saguṇa* are two modes,
Both Endless, Fathomless of Bliss Abodes.
Like fire the Form and Formless e'er remain
Kindled in wood or latent in its grains;
One seen aglow, power of other contained,
Both Truth forsooth, each remains unattained
The reason for Divinity to Incarnate Itself in a *Saguṇa* Form
Was explained by Śiva to Pārvatī:
When virtues *Dharma* on earth decrease,
Demons of pride and vice increase.
In diverse Forms the Lord takes birth,

To end woes of good men on earth.

Immortal Kākabhuśuṇḍi explained the Descent of Divinity in the *Saguṇa* Form of Rāma, to Garuḍa.

Adoration of the *Saguṇa* Form of Rāma reached the pinnacle of glory in devotion of Kākabhuśuṇḍi. In his relentless pursuit for instruction in worship of embodied *Brahma* (*Saguṇa* Divinity), he incurred his *Guru's* displeasure and Śiva's curse. Śiva relented and granted Bhuśuṇḍi the boon of unhindered access to any place, learning and deep devotion to Rāma.

Later, Bhuśuṇḍi went to Lomaśa *Muni* and requested him to instruct him in *Saguṇa* Divinity. Lomaśa explained the Glory of Rāma but reverted to the Absolute *Nirguṇa* Supreme Being. Bhuśuṇḍi respectfully reminded him repeatedly that he had requested for instruction on the embodied *Brahma*. The exasperated sage cursed him: 'You keep repeating your words like a crow! Go and take the form of a crow.' Bhuśuṇḍi bowed respectfully to the sage and taking the form of a crow flew away. The sage then regretted his impetuous curse and granted him boon of being dear to Rāma.

Bhuśuṇḍi resolved to retain the form of a crow in which he had earned the boon of adoration of Rāma. He went to Ayodhya to witness the birth of Śrī Rāma. He remained near the Divine Child during His Childhood, picking up crumbs falling from his mouth as the Child ate while he played in Daśaratha's courtyard. He flew away from the Divine Child when he tried to catch him in playful frolic. Once he even flew up to *Brahmaloka,* but was amazed to find Child Rāma's arm 'just two fingers away'. Bhuśuṇḍi was extremely perplexed and closed his eyes. He found himself in Ayodhya. Suddenly Child Rāma smiled and Bhuśuṇḍi found himself within His belly. Bhuśuṇḍi beheld the Cosmic Form in Rāma. He again found himself out of His body. Rāma asked him to seek a boon: 'The eight *Siddhīs,* the treasure of all comforts, salvation, wisdom, Discernment, the Essence of Knowledge and all other qualities

beyond the reach of *Munis,* I shall grant to you according to your desire'. Bhuśuṇḍi thought within himself: 'The Lord has offered everything to me except devotion, without which all attainments are meaningless.

Then Kākabhuśuṇḍi sought the boon of *Avirala Bhakti* with a fervour rarely equalled by a devotee of the embodied *Saguṇa* Rāma.

The Lord granted Bhuśuṇḍi the boon he had asked for and also revealed to him His most sacred teaching.

The Puruṣottama aspect–

Dr. Annie Besant observes: 'In the Ideal figure of Śrī Rāma Candra we have the Perfect Man; the man who in every relation of life—son, husband, brother, king, set an example of nobility and purity great as human imagination can depict. We have in Him the highest perfection to which human qualities can be carried; and it is this perfected humanity, tried to the utmost yet never found wanting, that acts so inspiring an ideal through the length and breadth of India.'

In his lecture on Śrī Rāma Candra, Prof. Śaṅkaranārāyaṇan declares: 'Śrī Rāma was a *Pūrṇāvatāra* in a sense that other *Avatāras* and even that of Śrī Kṛṣṇa were not. In none of them had God to share the joys and sorrows of mortal kind. *Śrī Rāmāvatāra* was pre-emminent over the rest, for in it alone, we meet with a suffering God whom suffering man can understand.'

When Divinity Manifested Itself on earth, God assumed the role of a *Puruṣa* and lived a human life beset with all the trials and tribulations of mortal life. Transcendence of embodied Divinity does not mean superiority in the circumstances of life but denotes infinite greatness in values and qualities of a superior life compared to finite lives. Suffering is an inescapable circumstance of finite life on which 'grief and sorrow cast their gloomy spell'. Appropriately therefore, when Divinity assumed a mortal form, the course of Rāma's earthly life was of a suffering God Whom suffering man could understand. Apart from his youth, Rāma's

entire life was beset with sufferings. In large measure, Kaikeyī as the instrument of Destiny shaped his life of suffering.

When Divinity Manifests Itself in an embodied Form, we expect an aura of Divinity around the Divine Incarnation. One expects superlative deeds like slaying of Kabandha, Virādha, Khara, Dūṣaṇa in which Majesty is evident, but deeds like lamenting for Sītā when she was kidnapped and Rāma being bound in *Nāgapāśa* during the war of Laṅka (which made Garuḍa proud of being Rāma's deliverer) perplex human beings. A human being is known not by the might he possesses but by his virtuous actions and the excellence of values of *Dharma* in the course of his life. When Vibhīṣaṇa was dismayed seeing Rāma on foot facing his mighty adversary Rāvaṇa seated on a well equipped chariot in the war of Laṅka, Rāma dispelled Vibhīṣaṇa's doubts. It was an invaluable sermon on *Dharma* and its nature.

Kausalyā, being the earthly mother of Rāma, had the distinction of beholding all three aspects of embodied *Brahma: Nirguṇa, Saguṇa* and *Puruṣottama* in her earthly son Rāma. At the very moment of Divine Rāma's Incarnation as her earthly Child, Kausalyā beheld the *Saguṇa* Form in her Infant Child.

Kausalyā immediately realised that the Form she beheld was indeed the embodied Form of the Supreme Being and was quick to understand the reason for the Divine Manifestation.

Kausalyā was a mother, even if she was the mother of the Divine Child; and understandably, she yearned to see her child:

> Then Kausalyā spoke to the Lord: 'Leave this Form for me, my son,
> Be my child which for a mother is her happiest possession.'
> Heeding her words, the God of gods, cried like a little one,
> Those who sing this song of the Lord reap fruits of His devotion.

The Lord played His *Puruṣottama* role as an Infant to perfection. His earthly mother soon forgot that Rāma was not only 'her happiest possession' but He had taken birth 'for

redemption (of humanity)'. The Lord then reminded her of His Divinity, lest the destined future became unbearable for her. While Kausalyā was engrossed in doting affection for her darling child, the Lord revealed Himself to her, but on this occasion in His *Nirguṇa* Cosmic Form.

True to her words, Kausalyā freed herself from the illusions of *Māyā*. Her doting love for her earthly child was transformed into spiritual love for Divine Rāma. She was, of course, Rāma's mother; and when the future Crown Prince of Ayodhya (as she thought) stood before her, she was thrilled.

In Mānasa, Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa emphasises the perfection of *Puruṣottama* Rāma. He was so dedicated to *Dharma* and so calm in suffering that even his mother could not know the tragic course Destiny had taken. Mānasa also delineates Kausalyā as worthy of being the earthly mother of the Lord Incarnate. When Rāma was banished, Kausalyā neither swooned like Daśaratha nor spoke a harsh word against Kaikeyī as Daśaratha had done. She sent Rāma calmly to the forests 'to fulfill his father's commands'. Daśaratha died in grief when Rāma proceeded on exile; Kausalyā calmly lived on to behold Rāma when he returned from banishment. For Daśaratha Rāma was his son; for Kausalyā, Rāma was her God. (*Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* narrates Kausalyā's visit to Rāma when he was meditating in seclusion, to pay obeisance to *Nirguṇa* Rāma and seek knowledge of the means of salvation).

Puruṣottama Rāma not only preached *Dharma* but also translated *Dharma* into the course of his life. *Māyā* tantalizes human beings with sense-yearnings, passions and desires. One has to distinguish between *Dharma* and *Dharma*. Such are the complexities of life that *Dharma* is sometimes in conflict with itself (the manner in which Rāma killed Bāli); one has then to distinguish between *Dharma* and higher *Dharma*. Finally highest *Dharma* demands self sacrifice and personal suffering for the sake of others (Sītā's *Agni parīkṣā* and exile after coronation).

Name of Rāma—

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa draws a parallel between the Name of Rāma and *AUM* the symbol of *Brahma,* the Eternal Spirit. Like *AUM* is the source of all Energy: 'All shine after Him Who shines; by His radiance is all this illumed', the Name of Rāma is the substance of the Sun, Moon and Agni, the Trinity of Gods, the soul and call of *Vedas'.* In *Mānasa Pīyūṣa,* Mahātmā Añjanīnandana Śaraṇa says:

When the Name of Rāma is chanted, the letter *'Ra'* being the *bīja* (seed) *mantra* of Agni, destroys all good and evil *Karmas* which lead to heaven or hell, and cleanses the mind of sense desires (the Name is like fire for cotton of sins); 'Ā' the *Bīja Mantra* of the Sun, illumes the *Vedas* and leads to brilliance of Knowledge, destroying the darkness of ignorance; *'Ma'* the *Bīja Mantra* of the Moon ends *Tritāpa* (the three pains) and leads to peace of the soul and devotion (the Name shines like the Moon in the cloudless sky of devotees' hearts). Therefore the Name of Rāma cleanses the mind, destroys all *Karmas,* brings detachment, understanding of *Vedas,* destroys ignorance for attainment of Knowledge, freedom from three pains and devotion.



बयरु अकारनसब काहू सों। जो कर हित अनहित ताहू सों॥३॥
झूठइ लेना झूठइ देना। झूठइ भोजन झूठ चबेना॥
बोलहिं मधुर बचन जिमि मोरा। खाइ महा अहि हृदय कठोरा॥४॥

"They bear enmity towards all without rhyme or reason; nay, they behave inimically even with those who are actively kind to them. They are false in their dealings (lying is their stock-in-trade); nay, falsehood is their dinner and falsehood their breakfast (whatever they eat is intended to deceive others). They speak honeyed words just like the peacock, that has a stony heart and devours the most venomous snake."

—*Mānasa*

Glimpses of Different Aspects of Rāma in Mānasa

—Ram Niwas Lakhotia

The great Hindi epic *Rāmacaritamānasa* reflects, interalia, the different aspects of Lord Rāma, for whose favour and grace the great poet Tulasīdāsa is yearning as he wants a drop of the bellowing ocean of endless mercies of Lord Rāma. The poet Tulasīdāsa believes that bounty of Lord Rāma never ceases and the stream of His merciful grace can never be arrested. There are several occasions when we come across Lord Rāma's boundless grace. Tulasīdāsa is not tired of saying that the grace of Rāma has pervaded all creations, moving or unmoving, animate or inanimate. In fact we cannot find a single atom in *'Triloka'*, i.e., the 3 spheres of existence, which does not declare the evidence of Rāma's might or which does not glorify His holy name or is not impressive of the effulgent light of Hari or Viṣṇu or God Himself.

Tulasīdāsa is not merely a deft sculptor in presenting the image of Rāma but he has created such a figure of Rāma which is not merely for show but which is for the purpose of installation in the temple to be worshipped with devotion. And, Tulasīdāsa has excelled in this skill as he has penned every word in praise of Rāma from his heart. That is why the art of the great writer-sculptor Tulasīdāsa is not merely for exhibition but for arousing devotion and faith in the hearts of the people at large. As a reader we can appreciate the view-point of Tulasīdāsa only when we are able to establish a co-ordination of the three aspects i.e., the art of Tulasīdāsa as a sculptor, eyes of an astute reader and the outlook of an eager

devotee. In this article I have attempted in brief to deal with a few selected aspects of Rāma in *Rāmacaritamānasa* as beautifully described by the Saint poet Tulasīdāsa.

Rāma as God—

There may be various controversies on the views of Tulasīdāsa on certain aspects of social and political life but one thing is absolutely certain that there can be no controversy about one fact i.e., his fervent appeal towards the divinity of Rāma. And, even Tulasīdāsa is not prepared to budge an inch on this question. Whereas Rāma is presented as a historical figure in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* He is presented as a divine figure and an *Avatāra,* as a God who personifies as the son of Daśaratha and who is none else than the Lord or *Brahman* himself. Therefore, Tulasīdāsa becomes very curt towards those persons who start doubting the divinity of Lord Rāma. For example, for such persons he uses such strong words as given below:—

कहहिं सुनहि अस अधम नर, ग्रसे जे मोह पिसाच।
पाखण्डी हरि-पद-बिमुख, जानहिं झूठ न साँच॥

Thus, Rāma in *Mānasa* is not the King who is lost in the pages of history. That is why Tulasīdāsa does not say, "There was a king by the name of Rāma in Ayodhya." For *Tulasīdāsa* what is important is "Rāma is" and such a Rāma lives in Citrakūṭa and He lives forever. That is why he uses such words as can be seen from the following couplet:—

चित्रकूट महँ बसत प्रभु, नित सिय लखन समेत।
राम-नाम जप जाचकहिं, तुलसी अभिमत देत॥

Though Lord Rāma is God Himself in human form but Tulasīdāsa does not forget to present Him as a person who is adept in performing His duties in practical life and in showing reverence to the *Gurus.* Even Tulasīdāsa does not feel any hesitation in presenting Rāma with tears in his eyes over the death of the King Daśaratha as is seen from the following lines:—

मरण हेतु निज नेह निहारी।
भे अति बिकल धीर धुर धारी॥

Throughout the *Mānasa,* Rāma is presented as a person who is full *Brahman* and who has appeared in the world to grant grace to his devotees. Thus, Rāma is presented as a person who is very loving and dear to the poorest of the poor, as a person who has the strength to grant consciousness to Ahalyā who fell from the grace of the husband and also of the people; He befriends such a backward and poor person like *'Kevaṭa'* i.e., the boatman; who grants equal respect to eagle and monkeys and fulfils the desire of an old devotee Śabarī. Tulasīdāsa tells in clear terms to Pārvatī that Rāma is not an ordinary prince but is *"Brahman"*, the giver of *Yoga* and *Vedānta,* who has appeared as the son of Daśaratha, as is clear from the following:

राम ब्रह्म ब्यापक जग जाना।
परमानन्द परेश पुराना॥

When Paraśurāma's doubts were resolved and when he realised that Rāma was God in human form, he praised Rāma in highly appreciative terms and begged to be excused for his strong terms as can be seen from the following couplet:—

अनुचित बहुत कहेउँ अग्याता।
छमहु छमा मंदिर दोउ भ्राता॥
कहि जय-जय-जय रघुकुल-केतू।
भृगुपति गए बनहिं तप हेतू॥

Tulasī makes the supreme seer Atri, his mouth piece and describes Rāma in lyrical terms as the "Lord of immeasurable power, a dark exquisitely beautiful person, and Mount Mandara to churn the ocean of mundane existence with eyes like the full bloom-lotus, the dispeller of pride and every other vice; the ornament of the Solar race, breaker of Śiva's bow, the delight of the greatest saints and sages and the destroyer of the demon host." Thus, according to Tulasī, Rāma is one mysterious Lord who is all pervading sovereign whom the sensual can, by no means

comprehend and who is a tree of paradise to his worshippers.

Reasons for Rāma's Avatāra—

Tulasīdāsa explains the reasons for the *Avatāra* of Rāma in the following couplet:—

बिप्र धेनु सुर संत हित, लीन्ह मनुज अवतार।
निज इच्छा निर्मित तनु, माया गुन गो पार॥

Thus, Rāma appears in the world only to provide relief to the suffering humanity and particularly for the Brahmins, the cows, the saints and the good people in particular. Here Tulasīdāsa does not show any preference of Rāma for the Brahmins. Had that been the case, Rāma would have taken birth in a Brahmin family but that was not the case. He appeared in a *Kṣatriya* family. The Brahmins are those people who sacrifice their personal comforts and whose life is meant for the spread of *Dharma* alone. Likewise, the saints and sages are only interested in other's welfare. By appearing as an *Avatāra,* Rāma works for the well being of the entire world and not merely for a few groups as is wrongly understood.

Rāma—the most Beautiful—

We come across a few glimpses of the beautiful appearance of Lord Śrī Rāma so much so that not only the human beings but even the birds and animals are enamoured of the great charm and beauty of Rāma. The aim of Tulasīdāsa in presenting a very beautiful picture of Lord Rāma is to cleanse the devotees who by taking bath of devotion get purified . The ultimate aim of the poet in describing the beauty of Rāma is to clean our hearts. Rāma is the ultimate aim of *Mānasa* for helping the devotees to have the purest heart.

In Janaka's kingdom even the king Janaka lost the consciousness for the time being about his own self as is clear from the following beautiful couplet:—

मूरति मधुर मनोहर देखी।
भयउ बिदेह बिदेह बिसेषी॥

Śrī Janaka was considered as a great philosopher-king and a knower of true knowledge. Even many great sages used to come to him for getting proper instructions about the real knowledge. Even such a great man of knowledge like Janaka became the recipient of the true knowledge from Rāma for which Rāma went to Janakapur. Indeed Rāma is presented as a store-house of imperishable knowledge.

When Sītā saw the beautiful figure of Rāma she was lost herself for a while in ecstacy. This has been very beautifully described by Tulasīdāsa in the following lines:—

थके नयन रघुपति छबि देखें।
पलकन्हिहूँ परिहरीं निमेषें॥
अधिक सनेहँ देह भै भोरी।
सरद ससिहि जनु चितव चकोरी।
लोचन मग रामहि उर आनी।
दीन्हे पलक कपाट सयानी॥

Rāma as the Charming Bridegroom—

In Janakapur Lord Rāma as the charming bridegroom, has been described in ecstatic and lyrical terms in *Mānasa,* in particular, while proceeding towards the gate of Janaka's palace. The various gods who came from the heavens got ecstatic and derived great satisfaction in having a glimpse of Rāma as the bridegroom as is depicted in the most beautiful words in the following lines of *Mānasa*:—

जेहिं बर बाजि रामु असवारा।
तेहि सारदउ न बरनै पारा॥
संकरु राम रूप अनुरागे।
नयन पंचदस अति प्रिय लागे॥
हरि हित सहित रामु जब जोहे।
रमा समेत रमापति मोहे॥
निरखि राम छबि बिधि हरषाने।
आठइ नयन जानि पछिताने॥

सुर सेनप उर बहुत उछाहू।
बिधि ते डेवढ़ लोचन लाहू॥
रामहि चितव सुरेस सुजाना।
गौतम श्रापु परम हित माना॥
देव सकल सुरपतिहि सिहाहीं।
आजु पुरंदर सम कोउ नाहीं॥

Supreme renunciation by Rāma—

Rāma is described in Mānasa as a person who renounced the kingdom just to keep the words of his mother Kaikayī and the promise of his father Daśaratha. And, what a renunciation! Rāma had no feeling of pain or affliction but great pleasure and humility while renouncing everything and proceeding for exile of 14 years.

Rāma instead of accepting post and power and all sorts of honours and decorations preferred a life of renunciation. We come across several persons who are great devotees of Rāma but instead of giving material benefits to Rāma they only become the recipients of His grace through Rāma's renunciation. For example, Sugrīva was successful in getting kingdom only because he came into contact with Lord Rāma. Similarly, Vibhīṣaṇa became the king of Lanka only due to the grace of Lord Rāma.

Thus, Rāma goes to the forest smilingly, leaving all pleasures and princely honours behind which is very beautifully described in *Kavitāvalī* in the following words:—

संग सुबंधु पुनीत प्रिया, मनो धर्मु क्रिया धरि देह सुहाई।
राजिवलोचन राम चले, तजि बाप को राज बटाऊ की नाई॥

Importance of Rāma Nāma—

One of the great features of *Mānasa* is that it excels in proving the superiority of the name of Rāma over "Rāma" Himself which is easily accessible to His devotees. Tulasīdāsa prefers the name of "Rāma" to all other names of Lord Rāma like Raghuvara, etc. It is generally said that all human beings

are the same. But this is not accepted by the scientists as when a patient requires blood he cannot be given any type of blood but only the blood from the group which matches his blood-group. Likewise, though all names of Lord Rāma appear to convey the same meaning, yet the word "Rāma" has a special significance and this is made clear by Tulasīdāsa in the above couplet. Three letters of the name of Rāma i.e., R, A&M respectively convey as the causes of fire, sun and moon. Therefore, the name of Rāma has a special significance which is described by Tulasīdāsa at various places in *Mānasa* like the following:—

बन्दउँ नाम राम रघुबर को।
हेतु कृसानु भानु हिमकर को॥

Rāma as Protector of Dharma—

As regards the importance of the origin of Śrī Rāma as an *Avatāra* the great Sage Viśwāmitra said that Rāma came only as a protector of *Dharma* as is clear from the following couplet:—

धर्म सेतु पालक तुम्ह ताता।
प्रेम बिबस सेवक सुखदाता॥

Viśwāmitra has praised Rāma by conferring the title of protector of the bridge of *Dharma.* This is because the real bridge of *Dharma* is meant to unite persons having faith in *Dharma* but when it is on the verge of collapse, because different persons due to pride and egoism are engaged in conflict, then Lord Rāma appears as a bridge between such conflicting persons and tries to bring them together. It is a known fact of history that there was a great conflict between the Sage Vasiṣṭha and sage Viśwāmitra. It was Lord Rāma who treated both the sages as his *Gurus* and offered the highest respect to them and ultimately acted as a great bridge between Viśwāmitra and Vasiṣṭha, as the protector of *Dharma.*

Rama's narration as Purifier—

The various glimpses of Rāma as presented by Tulasīdāsa in *Mānasa* have one great effect of purifying the mind and heart

of everyone as is said so beautifully by Tulasīdāsa in the following couplet:—

निज गिरा पावन करनि कारन, राम जस तुलसी कह्यो।
रघुबीर चरित अपार बारिधि, पार कबि कौनें लह्यो॥



जाग्रत्स्वप्नसुषुप्त्याख्या संसृतिर्या प्रवर्तते।
तस्या विलक्षणः साक्षी चिन्मात्रस्त्वं रघूत्तम॥
त्वत्त एव जगज्जातं त्वयि सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम्।
त्वय्येव लीयते कृत्स्नं तस्मात्त्वं सर्वकारणम्॥
रज्जावहिमिवात्मानं जीवं ज्ञात्वा भयं भवेत्।
परात्माहमिति ज्ञात्वा भयदुःखैर्विमुच्यते॥

"O the best among *Raghus*! You are different and singularly unique from the creation enveloped by the three conditions—wakefulness, dream and the deep slumber (the fourth one known as *Turīya*). You are simply a witness of that—consciousness personified indeed. You are the origin of the universe and it is located in you alone. It all merges in you. Therefore you are the original cause of everything. Man suffers a lot of fear on account of his assumption that he is *Jīva* just like the notion of a snake in a piece of rope. But the moment the *Jīva* realizes that it is *Paramātmā* it is freed from all fears and sufferings."

—(*A.R. Ayo.* 1. 24.26)

भर्तारं न ममेहाद्य हन्तुमर्हसि मानद। नहीदृशं भयं किंचित् कुलस्त्रीणामिहोच्यते॥
भयानामपि सर्वेषां वैधव्यं व्यसनं महत्।

"You ought not to kill my husband here today, O bestower of honour! For nothing is said to be so dreadful as the death of a husband in the eyes of ladies of noble birth in this world. Of all dreaded things widowhood is a great misfortune."

(*V. R.*)

Śrī Rāma's: Navadhā-Bhakti
(The nine forms of devotion)

—Prof. H. C. Gaur

Devotion a pathway for emancipation of the Jīva—

Emancipation of the *Jīva* is the deliverance of a person from the perpetual birth-death cycle of *Saṁsāra*. Devotion (*Bhakti*) is one of the paths that has been recommended to be pursued. But does this path readily become available even to one who is born of low caste, a tribal and above all a woman and who did not have any opportunity of a formal introduction into spirituality? This is aptly illustrated from the Śabarī episode in *Rāmacaritamānasa*. Nine forms of devotion, all of which were apparently pursued by her, were revealed by *Bhagawān* Rāma Himself to His devotee Śabarī.

Śabarī was born of low caste and a tribal.... As was then customary among her tribe, a large number of goats were to be sacrificed at the time of her marriage at the age of seven. "So much sin for my marriage." The thought of that dismal practice appalled her conscience and she left home to be with holy persons *(Ṛṣis)* at the hermitage of *Ṛṣi* Mātaṅga on the western edge of *Pampā* lake. She was not accepted initially because of her low caste. Also, it was a place for *Brahmacārīs* and that there was no woman to take care of her. She pleaded that she would sweep floors, collect fire wood and do other menial jobs, if she was allowed to stay in the *Āśrama*. At her insistence, in spite of objections from others in the *Āśrama*, *Ṛṣi* Mātaṅga accepted her as a disciple. He could perceive the brilliance of her extreme devotion to *Bhagawān* Śrī Rāma and he alone knew that this is one of the nine forms of devotion,

which were to be explained later by *Bhagawān* Rāma Himself to Śabarī. Mātaṅga told fellow *Ṛṣis:* We are learned and practice devotion *(Bhakti),* Śabarī has realized Him by total devotion and renunciation *(Vairāgya).*

Lessons from this episode and its relevance to *Rāma Rājya?*

Bhagawān Śrī Rāma is an incarnation and Śabarī is a mortal. She is ugly looking, and is of low caste but she prepares herself for receiving God's blessings, which has been foretold to her by *Ṛṣi* Mātaṅga at the time of his demise: "Śrī Rāma will visit the highly sacrosanct hermitage of yours and receive hospitality as a guest. Having seen Him (before casting off your body) you will ascend to the realm that knows no decay (*Vālmīkī Rāmāyaṇa: Araṇya Kāṇḍa* 74. 15-16). Other *Ṛṣis* would not care for her and would consider their bodies as polluted if it came in contact with her shadow even. She did what was possible. She did service to *Ṛṣis* by quietly placing logs of wood collected from the forest, for their use (in *Yajña*). She had extreme love and affection for *Bhagawān* Rāma and she had to stay at the *Āśrama* and await His arrival. She did not want to cause inconvenience to anybody. As a devotee, she gladly accepts troubles due to discrimination in the *Āśrama* and is not bothered by the antagonistic attitude of *Ṛṣis.* She neither complains of their attitude nor is angry at their mistakes. Also, instead of trying to convince them, she is trying to make herself suitable for receiving *Bhagawān* Rāma's blessings. In meditation: You do not cause trouble to anybody: physically, morally or spiritually, you tolerate the troubles caused in receiving God's blessing, you feel happy in whatever situation you are placed (renunciatory approach). Śabarī understood her limitations. She is happy in whatever situations she is placed since she has to wait for the opportunity to have the *Darśana* of Śrī Rāma, which will also give her emancipation.

She did not know how she would recognize Rāma, when He would come to her cottage; and how she would receive Him?

"I am of low caste and of poor understanding and intelligence. My relationship with Him is only as a devotee". When Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa did arrive in the forest named *Mātaṅgvana* (on their way to *Ṛṣyamūka* hill to meet Sugrīva) to meet Śabarī: With lotus eyes, long arms, a tuft of matted hair on their head like a crown, one of dark hue and the other fair when she saw the two brothers, she fell prostrate and embraced their feet. She recalled what *Ṛṣi* Mātaṅga had told her. Overwhelmed with great joy and happiness, she was speechless. It was customary to wash the feet of *Gurus* and other religious people when they came to visit a devotee. She was poor and did not even have a vessel to bring water and she never dared to approach the sacred *Pampā sāgara*. It is said that when she joined her cupped hands, with great emotions, tears from her eyes flowed like sacred *Gaṅgājala* with which she washed the feet of *Bhagawān* Rāma. She offered him seat, flowers, and nuts and fruits to eat. He accepted them with pleasure. With folded hands she stood before Śrī Rāma "How do I praise You?" She says:

अधम ते अधम अधम अति नारी। तिन्ह महँ मैं मतिमंद अघारी॥

She is lowest among low, has poor intelligence and has limitation in being a woman. She does not know *Mantras* for prayer and how to sing songs in His praise. Assured the lord of *Raghus:*

कह रघुपति सुनु भामिनि बाता। मानउँ एक भगति कर नाता॥
जाति पाँति कुल धर्म बड़ाई। धन बल परिजन गुन चतुराई॥
भगति हीन नर सोहइ कैसा। बिनु जल बारिद देखिअ जैसा॥

"I recognize no other kinship except that of devotion. He continued: in spite of high caste, heritage, religious activities, wealth, (physical) strength, good relationship and qualities (accomplishment) a person without devotion (does not become His devotee) and is like a cloud without water "(*Mānasa* 3.34.3). *Bhagawān* Rāma told her that it was sufficient that she had the devotion and thus she was His devotee.

With *Bhagawān* Rāma's blessing, the discrimination due to high and low caste, heritage, religion, wealth and poverty, good and bad qualities did not come in their way. Such was *Rāma Rājya*. *Bhagawān* Rāma even told her the characteristics of a devotee. He Himself gave the discourse to describe to her the nine ways/form of devotion. The Lord says: Listen carefully (the nine forms of devotion) and cherish them in your mind.

प्रथम भगति संतन्ह कर संगा। दूसरि रति मम कथा प्रसंगा॥

दो०—गुर पद पंकज सेवा तीसरि भगति अमान।
चौथि भगति मम गुन गन करइ कपट तजि गान॥

मंत्र जाप मम दृढ़ बिस्वासा। पंचम भजन सो बेद प्रकासा॥
छठ दम सील बिरति बहु करमा। निरत निरंतर सज्जन धरमा॥
सातवँ सम मोहि मय जग देखा। मोतें संत अधिक करि लेखा॥
आठवँ जथालाभ संतोषा। सपनेहुँ नहिं देखइ परदोषा॥
नवम सरल सब सन छलहीना। मम भरोस हियँ हरष न दीना॥

The first form of devotion (in the order) is keeping company/ fellowship of holy men *(Santa)*. The second form is marked by fondness (love) to hear My stories. The third form of devotion is humble service at the feet of the preceptor *(Guru)* without pride and deceit. The fourth form of devotion consists in singing My devotional songs. "Muttering My name with unwavering belief is the fifth type of devotion. The sixth form of devotion consists in practice of self-control over senses *(Dama)*, (in possessing) virtue and in desisting (having renounced) from manifold activities and ever pursuing the (course of) conduct prescribed for saints. He practices the seventh form of devotion, who sees the world pervaded by Me and whose respect for saints is even greater than for Myself. He cultivates the eighth type of devotion, who remains contented with whatever he gets and never (even in dream) does he look at fault of others. Finally, the ninth form of devotion requires that the devotee be simple *(Sarala)*, his conduct be without deceit (straight in one' dealing), he be humble (arousing a sense of compassion), cherish in his heart

implicit faith in Me, and is without exultation (excessive pleasure of triumph) and depression (of spirits). Lord Rāma concluded the nine types of devotion (*Navadhā-Bhakti*) saying "Any person, whether man or woman or any creature (sentient or insentient) who imbibes (even) one of these forms of devotion is dear to Me."

Bhagawān Rāma further told Śabarī: You are possessed of unflinching devotion of all these types, and thus the destination, difficult even for sages, is within easy reach today. He added:

मम दरसन फल परम अनूपा। जीव पाव निज सहज सरूपा॥

The unique fruit of seeing Me (My *Darśana*) is that *Jīva* easily gets established in his own self (*Mānasa* 3.35.4). *Bhagawān* Rāma Himself described these forms of devotion to His disciple Śabarī. Due to *Bhagawān* Rāma's benevolence, discrimination between them was removed. In a similar situation, Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna about characteristic features of a devotee. "For one who worships Me, accepts Me as supreme meditates with single-minded O Pārtha, to him, who is absorbed in Me I, without delay become the saviour from the ocean of mortal *Saṁsāra* (fraught with death)" (*Gītā* 12.6-7).

Comments on *Navadhā-Bhakti*—

It will be noted that the first characteristic of the form of devotion explained by Śrī Rāma to Śabarī is the (devotee's) company/association with saintly people. It is considered as the first priority. One may ask "Who is a saint/saintly person?" He is a person in whose company one has the godly feeling. He is a *Jñānī,* and always peaceful. His eyes show the inner peace (of mind). In his heart, he has love and compassion for all. His speech is for the praise of the Lord and he is friendly to all. His life should set example of norms ordained by *Dharma.* He may or may not be a realized soul himself but he should be able to set the devotee on the path of realization. A self-realized saint has to have control over the mind and senses. Also, through humility, he should win over even wicked people.

"The second characteristic of a devotee practising the second form of devotion is his love for the company of the people who recite happenings of My life." Such people will have love for Him. You will have love for Him if you have love for yourself, your family and the society.

बिनु सतसंग न हरि कथा तेहि बिनु मोह न भाग।
मोह गएँ बिनु राम पद होइ न दृढ़ अनुराग॥

"Without company of saints, you have no opportunity of listening to the recitation of *Hari-kathā* and without which you do not shed lust, and without shedding lust you do not develop deep love for *Bhagawan* Rāma. (*Mānasa Uttarakāṇḍa*. 7.61)

"In asking Garuḍa to go to Nīlagiri hills where Kāgabhuśuṇḍi is always reciting *Rāma-Kathā*, *Bhagawān* Śiva tells him:

जाइहि सुनत सकल संदेहा। राम चरन होइहि अति नेहा॥

After hearing which your miseries due to lust and doubts will be removed (*Mānasa* 7.60.4).

The characteristic of a devotee practising the third form of devotion is his humble service to a spiritual teacher, the preceptor, without a feeling of pride and deceit. The term *Guru*, referred to in this context, is an enlightened soul, because only a spiritual 'light house' can shine and shed light. There has always been a *Guru-Śiṣya* (teacher-disciple) *paramparā* (tradition) in our society for receiving the spiritual knowledge. *Santa* Tulasī Dāsa has posed the question:

बिनु गुर होइ कि ग्यान ग्यान कि होइ बिराग बिनु।

"Can there be knowledge without a *Guru*? Can there be knowledge without dispassion?" (*Mānasa* 7.89 a)

"The devotee, practising the seventh type of devotion sees the world in Me and his respect for religious people is more than that for Me". Such a person is a self-realized soul resting in his own *Swarūpa*. This is the vision of an *Ātmajñānī*. There is a similar verse in *Bhagawad Gītā*. Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna: "He who sees Me in all things and all things in Me, never becomes separated from Me nor do I become separated from him"(6.30).

Bhagawān Rāma told Śabarī: A devotee's respect for religious persons (saints) should be more than that for Me. This is illustrated in various incidents in *Rāmacaritamānasa*. Soon after Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna return from the *Āśrama* of the *Guru* (Vasiṣṭha), another *Ṛṣi* Viśvāmitra, asks Mahārāja Daśaratha that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa be sent with him to kill the demons as *Mārica* and *Subāhu,* who were creating disturbances in conduct of *Yajña* and other religious activities. He reminded Mahārāja Daśaratha that it was the duty of King to protect sages and at the intercession of Vasiṣṭha, Mahārāja Daśaratha agreed (*albeit* reluctantly) to the proposal.

The characteristic of a devotee practising eighth type of devotion is described thus: "He is satisfied in whatever he gets and not even in dream does he see fault of others." There is a similar verse in *Śruti:* "...accept and enjoy (by renunciation), what He has allotted to you and do not covet for anybody's wealth (*Īśa Up.* 1). A man can feel satisfied in whatever he gets, only if he overcomes desires for more wealth and materialistic possessions. Desire is one of the three knots *(Hṛdayagranthi)* which are considered to bind the heart of a person (the other two being: *Avidyā* and *Karma*). The desire creeps in when a person forgets the true nature of the self and tends to identify it with the body. Desire in a person creates various thoughts and fancies and imagination and he gets involved into affairs of *Saṁsāra,* like a silk worm in a cocoon. A man will be satisfied in whatever he gets, only if his desires are controlled. Also, a devotee who has full self-realization and sees all beings in self and the self in all beings, has neither prejudice nor dislike for anything or any person. He is free from egoism, pride and arrogance. Such a self-realized soul does not see fault of others.

The characteristics of a devotee following ninth form of devotion is straight-forward and simple, how can he cheat others? He is humble and happy in whatever situation he is placed.



Rāma-Kathā-Kāvya
(In Kashmiri Language)

—Jankinath Kaul 'Kamal'

Poetical compositions in Kashmiri language, of stories and narratives, based on Epics and *Purāṇas* had come up in Kashmir during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin (1420—1470 A.D.) popularly known as *'Bādśāha'*. This saint-king, an admirer of wisdom and learning, "was much impressed with the Hindu *Sāstras* and got many including the *Mahābhārata*, translated into Persian for his close study." His high sense of tolerance became known in the history of Kashmir. However, there was no literature on *Rāma-Kathā-Kāvya*. Dr. Buhler came to Kashmir in 1875 A.D. in search of Sanskrit manuscripts. While giving Sanskrit titles of the manuscripts in *'Śāradā'* characters he said in his report (recorded as Buhler Report) that the Government collection of manuscripts included works on both the Brahmanical and Musalman styles. To the first belonged *Lallavākyāni*, the *Bāṇāsura-Vadha*, the *Kṛṣṇāvatāra* and the *Janmacarita*. Out of these the first pertains to Kashmir 'Śaivism and *Vedānta* philosophy and the others to *Kṛṣṇa-Kaṭhā*. In fact we do not come across a *Rāmacarita* in Kashmir till the 19th century.

It was Mahārāja Gulāb Singh (1846—1857 A.D.) who made Kashmir a part of his territory which is now known as the Jammu and Kashmir State. The Dogrā rulers were brave, kind and god-fearing. Being descendants in the line of *Sūrya Vaṁśa* dynasty, to which *Bhagawān* Rāma belonged, they accepted Śrī Rāma to be their chosen deity. Naturally Raghunātha Temples and Rāma Temples were constructed throughout the territory at prominent places. People began to worship Rāma also and

draw inspiration from his divinely brave and considerate deeds which He performed "for the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of *Dharma,"* as enunciated in the *Gītā*—

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे॥

'As is the king so are the subjects'. According to this dictum the people of Kashmir also were influenced and they turned to Śrī Rāma. This gave birth to *Rāma-Kāvya* in Kashmir. Soon a devotee-poet named P. Prakāśa Rāma wrote *Rāmāvatāra Carita* in 1847 A.D. that corresponds to *Saṁvat* 1904, as recorded in the manuscript itself. This was the first *Rāmāyaṇa* written in the Kashmiri language.

During the following years of the Dogrā rule different authors among Kashmiri Pandits wrote the story of Rāma under different names. A short mention is made here—

Śaṅkara Rāmāyaṇa by Pandit Śaṅkara Kaul in 1870 A.D.

Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa by Pandit Ānanda Rāma Rāzdān in 1880 *circa.*

Viṣṇu Pratāpa Rāmāyaṇa by Pandit Viṣwambhara Nātha Kaul in 1913.

Śarmā Rāmāyaṇa by the saint-devotee Pandit Nīla Kaṇṭha Śarmā written during 1919—1926 A.D.

Tārā Canda Rāmāyaṇa by Pandit Tārā Canda in 1926.

Amara Rāmāyaṇa by Pandit Amaranātha 'Amara' in 1940.

Pandit Lakṣmaṇa Joo 'Bulbul' composed *Rāma Gītā.*

Manuscript copies of the above are reported to be with the descendants of the authors or the Research Library of J&K Government.

Rāmāvatāra Carita of Pandit Prakāśa Rāma became popular and was first published in Persian Script in the year 1910 A.D. at the Vishinath Press, Srinagar. This came to be known as *Prakāśa Rāmāyaṇa.* A later edition was published in Devanāgarī script. But this is not extant now.

Sir George Grierson, while on linguistic servey of India, edited the *Rāmāvatāra Carita* in Roman script and it was published in 1930 A.D. He gives name of the poet as Divākara Prakāśa Bhat. It is possible that Prakāśa Rāma was known by that time in his later life by this name among those who knew him well and honoured him. But the dates regarding his life as determined by Grierson are quite different from those established with evidence by later scholars. Dr. S. K. Raina calculates the poet's life span from 1819 to 1885 A.D. A revised and enlarged edition of the work, edited by Prof. Baljinātha Pandit under the name *'Kośura Rāmāyaṇa'* was brought out by the cultural Academy of J&K Govt. in 1965 A.D. This was again in Persian script. But earnest need of publishing it in *Devanāgarī* script was felt by a class of the people, especially by the Hindu women who knew Hindi only and sang the *Rāmāyaṇa* with devotion and interest. Dr. Raina rose to the occasion. He transcribed the text into *Devanāgarī* script and also translated into Hindi. Bhuvana Vani Trust of Lucknow published the book in 1975 A.D. in a much improved condition, with a foreward by Dr. Karan Singh, former *Sadri-Riyāsat* of the Jammu and Kashmir State. This book is in eight parts. The first seven parts correspond with the names of the seven parts of *Rāmacaritamānasa* of Tulasīdāsa (Pub: Gita Press, Gorakhpur) and the eighth part Lava-Kuśa Kāṇḍa is additional in it. Prakāśa Rāma gives intervening poems in the epic as does Rādheyśyāma in his Hindi *Rāmāyaṇa*. This has an advantage in so far as it avoids monotony and the reader feels rejuvenated.

Dr. Raina located two more manuscripts of this *Rāmāyaṇa*. One was reported to be with Pt. Viśwambhara Nātha Bhat of Damjan village and the other with Pt. Nanda Lāla Rāzdān of Akingam in Kashmir. But unfortunately since most of the cultural beauty of Kashmir got smashed by militancy, it became difficult to locate the MSS.

No published account of the life of the saint poet Pt. Parkāśa

Rāma is available. It has come from mouth to mouth that the celebrated author lived at Kuryegam village in Qazigund, Kashmir. Among the people he was particularly known as Prakāśa Rāma Kuryegami, an ardent devotee of goddess Tripurasundarī, who is said to have graced him with a wonderful power of speech. He sang his own poetry with utmost devotion that made him often dance in divine ecstasy.

The chronological background of *Rāma-Kathā-Kāvya* in Kashmiri language prompted a critical appreciation of the *Prakāśa Rāmāyaṇa.* With this it becomes evident that the conquest of heart and minds of the masses, effected by the poet, was an achievement for him, more important and lasting than a victory won in a war by a monarch. Though we know very little about the poet's life and *Sādhanā* yet this work invites a deep study of the wonderful expressions—esoteric, meaningful and common use—besides masterly use of rhetoric and prosody. We give below a glimpse of a few expressions in English renderings from the *Rāmāyaṇa*—

The *Rāmāvatāra Carita* or *Prakāśa Rāmāyaṇa* begins with a short benedictory poem extolling the heroes of the epic:

"Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa
Incarnated on this material plane.
As protectors of the world from evil".

The classical poem begins with obeisance of Lord Gaṇeśa, Kumāra and *Guru.* In the introductory stanza, the poet gives the purport of the epic alongwith true perspective of the epic (characters)—

"Garments of knowledge
Are the imbibed excellent qualities
That are represented by
Aṅgada, Sugrīva, Jāmavanta and Vibhīṣaṇa,
Prakṛti is Kaikeyī, goodwill is Sumitrā,
Daśaratha represents *Dharma,*
Kauśalyā is the fate *(Karma-lekhạ),*

Aging gives contentment,
Living in forest affords instruction;
Rāma will go there
To destroy the Lanka of greed."

Then starts a dialogue between Devī and Śiva, as persuaded by Nārada *Ṛṣi* who is always out to help people in getting emancipation. The Devī said to Śiva—

"Kindly tell with assurance
The fate of the people of *Kaliyuga*,
They will be far away from righteousness,
Given to evil deeds."

Śiva, then in reply, said, "Yes, there will be a time when people will hide the truth. But if they pray to Rāma with self-aware devotion, all impurity from their minds will get washed away. If one remembers and thinks of the Lord alone, one will live long in peace, see God and finally attain self-realization.

The story of Rāma is introduced and Śiva assures the Devī that incarnation of Rāma will force an end of the evil doers and the atrocities caused by Rāvaṇa on the Earth.

Further, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is divided into eight *Kāṇḍas* (sections): 1. *Bāla Kāṇḍa*, 2. *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa*, 3. *Araṇya Kāṇḍa*, 4. *Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍa*, 5. *Sundara Kāṇḍa*, 6. *Yuddha Kāṇḍa*, 7. *Uttara Kāṇḍa* and 8. *Lava-Kuśa Kāṇḍa*. Events and occurances are given with a touch of originality throughout the epic. In *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa* while describing the lamentation of Daśaratha after Rāma left for the forest, the poet locates the places of Rāma's wanderings in Kashmir. On the way through forests to the charming mountain lake called *Haramukuṭa Gaṅgā*. He thinks Rāma exiled in the forest of *Rāmārādhana* around which there are places of exquisite natural beauty like *Brahmasar, Mahalish, Haṁsadvāra, Nārān Nāg* etc.

In *Araṇya Kāṇḍa* the poet describes Rāma's meetings with Agastya *Ṛṣi* and friendship with *Jaṭāyu* in a running reference. Regarding the episode of Śūrpanakhā the poet describes the Daṇḍaka

forest as given by Kālidāsa, Vyāsa and Tulasīdāsa in their works and makes no mention of *Rāmārādhana* as said above.

In *Sundara Kāṇḍa* Sītā expresses jubilance after Hanumān gave her the message of Rāma—

"Spring has set in, O Lark! sing your song.
And come to ours, we shall rejoice;
Frost has ended, cataracts will gurgle;
Forget the pains brought by winter.
Wake up, it is getting late
And, come, let us rejoice".

In short, Pandit Prakāśa Rāma Kuryegāmi has used metaphors and similies throughout his work infuse *Rasa,* to present pictures, delineate characters or illustrate deep philosophical thought. He has aptly mentioned the norms of poetry and disciplines of social order in the narrative epic. Perhaps that has made the work more popular than the other *Rāmāyaṇas* mention of which has been made.



चौ०—सुनहु असंतन्ह केर सुभाऊ। भूलेहुँ संगति करिअ न काऊ॥
तिन्ह कर संग सदा दुखदाई। जिमि कपिलहि घालइ हरहाई॥१॥
खलन्ह हृदयँ अति ताप बिसेषी। जरहिं सदा पर संपति देखी॥
जहँ कहुँ निंदा सुनहिं पराई। हरषहिं मनहुँ परी निधि पाई॥२॥
काम क्रोध मद लोभ परायन। निर्दय कपटी कुटिल मलायन॥

"Now hear the characteristics of the impious, association with whom should be scrupulously avoided; for their company ever brings woe, even as a wicked cow ruins by her company a cow of noble breed. The heart of the wicked suffers terrible agony: for they ever burn at the sight of other's prosperity. Wherever they hear others reviled, they feel delighted as though they had stumbled upon a treasure lying on the road."

—*Mānasa*

Śrī Rāma in Orissan Culture and Literature

—*Prof. Satyananda Swain*

The composite culture of Orissa is religious in nature and mirror-like, it reflects almost all the religious practices of the world. In their everyday life, the Oriyas practise the fundamental canons of other religions spontaneously. The impact of Rāma on their cultural behaviour is distinct. Rāma and Orissan culture are inseparably embeded. Rāma is the alpha and omega of Orissan culture as the Oriyas begin counting Rāma for one and when an Oriya dies they chant the name of Rāma as the ultimate truth. In the Orissan ballad of Govinda Candra the folk poet insists on chanting the name of Rāma as it is the only method to surpass time and death, and to attain salvation. The folk songs of Orissa are mostly based on the Rāma story. The Oriya boatmen, fishermen, herdsmen and farmers sing the sorrowful songs linked with Rāma's exile or Sītā's abduction. They move the listeners to tear with their pathetic appeal.

The Oriyas claim a close kinship with Rāmacandra, the prince of Ayodhya, the noblest descendant of sun dynasty as king Kapilendradeva of the same dynasty ushered in the golden age in Orissa. The Oriya *Kṣatriyas* and *Khaṇḍāyats* deem themselves descendants of the sun dynasty. They adore and admire Rāma as the *Maryādā Puruṣottama* as an embodiment of valour and dignity. A good number of Oriyas have set examples of bold deeds being inspired by this great personality. The backward castes of Orissa adore Rāma as *Patita Pāvana*, the deliverer of the lowly. Many great Oriya poets depict Rāma's generosity towards the tribal woman (Śabarī), the tribal headman

(Guha) and the boatman *(Dhībara)* vividly. So the rich and the poor, the high caste and backward caste Oriyās worship Rāma as their ideal with equal devotion.

Interestingly Rāmacandra spent a larger period of his exile in Daṇḍaka forest in Orissa in the company of his royal consort Sītā and brother Lakṣmaṇa. They traversed throughly the woodland of Orissa. The places they rested in, have been converted into places of pilgrimage by the devout people of the state. There are a good number of temples dedicated to Rāma in Orissa. The Raghunātha temple at Odagaon in the district of Ganjam is most famous among them. *Kavisamrāṭ* Upendra Bhanja spent many years in this temple and attained poetic perfection here. The poet makes frank declaration of the fact in many places of his writings. The Raghunātha jew temple in the thousand year-old city of Cuttack is a very old and famous place of worship.

The temple attracts both Oriyā and non-Oriyā devotees even centuries after its errection. In recent years a Rāma temple has been built up in the cathedral city, Bhuvaneswar though there are many age-old temples of Śiva linked with the names of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna. This proves the perpetuity of Rāma impact on Orissan culture. Apart from these famous places there are numberless temples scattered all over Orissa dedicated to Lord Rāmacandra and his divine consort Sītā. Rāmacaṇḍī temple near the sun temple, Konark bears the testimony of Rāma's worship of the mother goddess during his exile. Raghunātha jew temple at Asureswar in the district of Cuttack is a very famous place of Rāma worship. For a month, the devotees of Rāma dress themselves as Hanumān, (monkey-god) and move about dancing. The function is concluded with a lot of fan-fare.

In the Jagannātha Temple the impact of Rāma worship is distinctly marked. The deities in the temple are dressed as Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā as on important occasions are linked with

Rāma's life like *Rāma Navamī, Rāmābhiṣeka* etc. The images of Hanumān have been installed at every entrance of the temple. The followers of Rāma, worship Jagannātha as such chanting *Tāraka Mantra.*

Rāmalīlā or *Rāmanāmī* is a mass festival of Orissa on *Rāmāyaṇa* theme. Dramatised version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are staged on open air theatres in many villages of Orissa. The villagers play the roles of the different characters with deep devotion. They live pious life for all the days of *Rāmalīlā*. The villagers go without non-vegetarian dishes and live on food offered to their lord. The actor who plays the role of Hanumān observes celebacy. In cases, he leads the life of a bachelor all along.

In *Daśaharā,* the worshippers of Durgā, the mother-goddess, recollect the memory of Rāma's victory march to Lanka, to vanquish Rāvaṇa. Oriyas begin their major work on this sacred day. On the closing day of the ceremony the monumental straw, structure of Rāvaṇa is set on fire.

In recent times, *Rāmacaritamānasa Pārāyaṇa* has gained ground in Oriya culture. The recital of the great scripture and scholarly discussion pertaining to it imbued the devotees of the villages and towns of Orissa with deep sense of devotion.

There are places named as Ayodhya (Balasore), Rameswar, Bharatpur, Kausalyaganga, Dasarathpur etc., parents name their children after *Rāmāyaṇa* characters. Literature, as the mirror of life of the society reflects the culture of a people. Naturally, the Oriya literature reflects the cultural habits of the Oriya people full of Rāma influence.

The Oriya *Rāmāyaṇa* is the oldest of its kind in a (regional) provincial language. (The Oriya literature is proud of the rendering of eighteen *Purāṇas* sculptures *(Aṣṭādaśa Purāṇa)* before all other regional languages of India from Sanskrit). This one is titled *Jagamohan Rāmāyaṇa* by Balarām Dāsa. This tells the full story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* vividly. The first great poet of Orissa, author of the famous Oriya *Mahābhārata* Saraladāsa

wrote the *Rāmāyaṇa* story in verse too. His book is known as *Yoga-Rāmāyaṇa* or *Rāvaṇa Rāmāyaṇa* or the *Vilaṅkā Rāmāyaṇa*. Like his *Mahābhārata,* this work is a purely original poetic work on the *Rāmāyaṇa* theme.

Late Pitāmbara Dāsa, the legendary author of *Purāṇas* tried his hand on *Rāmāyaṇa* story and presented his famous *Daṇḍī Rāmāyaṇa* to the Oriya speaking people. It is the most popular *Rāmāyaṇa* in Orissa.

Late Madhusūdana Dāsa, the saintly scholar rendered *Hanumannāṭaka* into Oriya. It is a brave deed indeed, as it involved so many literary and grammatical jargons.

There are famous, *Kṣetramohana Ṛāmāyaṇa, Keśava* and *Garga Rāmāyaṇa* in which the names of the writer and the work are inseparably joined.

Chikiti Rāmāyaṇa an Oriya rendering of *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, bears the name of the princely state of Chikiti as its prince translated it. It is very popular in the Southern part of the State.

All these *Rāmāyaṇas* are original works on *Rāmāyaṇa* theme. There are some straight renderings of the epic too. There are fifty types of Oriya *Rāmāyaṇa* as per the findings of Oriya *Jñāna Kośa*. All these works follow the puranic tradition.

Jayadeva's *Śrī Gītagovinda* projects Rāma as the seventh incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. The gifted Oriya poet's depiction passes into *Paṭṭa* paintings, stone-carvings and wood work too. It is one of the ten famous couplets sung in praise of Lord Jagannātha in the Purī temple every evening and the *Odishi* dancers enact this scene in amazing *Mudrā*. The devout Oriya *Vaiśṇavas* sing—

"Vitarasi dikṣu raṇe dikpati kamanīyam,
Daśamukhamaulibalim ramaṇīyam,
Keśava, Dhṛta Rāma Śarira Jaya Jagadīśa hare".

(O Keśava, O Hari, O Lord of the world, victory to Thee, Thou hast cut off the ten bejewelled heads of Rāvaṇa in the battle assuming the form of Rāma, just to present one head each to the Lords of the ten directions for their entertainment and utter joy.)

In the medieval *Kāvya* tradition of Orissa the Rāma-story has lion's share. Dhananjaya Bhanja's *Raghunāṭha Vilāśa* is the first best known poetic work on *Rāmāyaṇa* theme. It paved a path for latter poets to turn *Rāmāyaṇa* story into ornate poetry, Arjuna Dāsa's *Rāma Bibhā* is a pioneer work in this line.

Upendra Bhanja enjoys the proud title of *Kavisamrāṭ* (King of poets) for his magnum opus, *(Baidehīśa Vilāsa)*. The poetic excellence of this major poetry on *Rāmāyaṇa* theme is matchless. The poem is compared to the ornate sun temple, Konark for its poetic images and intricate style. The balanced blending of the erotic and spiritual make the book popular among the scholar readers. This inimitable work, tempted many an Oriya poet to compose poems on the *Rāmāyaṇa* theme.

Vyāsakavi Fakira Mohan Senāpati is the first modern Oriya poet to translate the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* into chaste Oriya Verse. *Kavivara* Rādhānātha Ray, translated Tulasīdāsa's beautiful lines into a book, titled, *Tulāsī Stavaka. Bhakta Kavi* Madhusūdana Rao wrote his immortal *Sītā Vanavāsa* (exile of Sītā), an episode from *Uttara Rāma Carita.* The best known modern long poem, *(Khaṇḍa Kāvya)* on this theme is *Tapasvinī* by Swabhab Kavi Gangadhara Meher, the last but not the least of the poets of this modern age in Oriya literature. Its visual appeal and lyric grace make the work timeless.

There is no end to works on *Rāmāyaṇa* theme as it were. In recent times a prominent professor of Physics Dr. Harihar Mishra, has successfully translated *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* into simple but moving Oriya poetry. It renews the Rāma tradition in Orissa in modern times of materialism. Besides these monumental works individual poems are written on *Rāmāyaṇa* theme. The images of *Rāmāyaṇa* character recur in the modern poems of Oriya literature. The image of Gautamī by Rajendra Paṇḍa proves timelessness of *Rāmāyaṇa* theme in literature.

The Oriya culture and literature have been enriched with Rāma influence from time to time by master minds of the state and the nation as well.



Vāsudeva Swāmī—The Andhra Vālmīki

—*G. V. Narayan Rao*

We come across a good number of *Rāmāyaṇams* under different nomenclatures, in various languages, authored by eminent poets and renowned scholars. Even in Telugu, there are various *Rāmāyaṇams* such as (1) *Bhāskara Rāmāyaṇam* (ii) *Gopīnātha Rāmāyaṇam* (iii) *Molla Rāmāyaṇam* (iv) *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam* etc. In these works, either the story differs from the original Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇam,* or it is an abridgement thereof.

But the *Mandaram* is a metrical translation of the original. It contains transparent translation of the 24,000 Sanskrit *Ślokas* into Telugu, in the form of verses in Telugu. Meanings of words in each verse are given. Substance of each verse is also given. Added to this, detailed commentary and spiritual aspects are given. It also contains constructive criticism of other authors of *Rāmāyaṇam.* The views of foreign dignitories on the Indian epic are also quoted.

Thus Śrī Subbā Rāo's *Mandaram* becomes elaborate and consists of seven big volumes. It is indeed a monumental work, involving herculian strain—both mental and physical. It is a manyfaceted gem of a beauty. This great epic was dedicated to *Bhagawān* Kodaṇḍa Rāma, at his Lotus-feet at Ontimitta in Cuddapah District, in Andhra Pradesh. It is at this sacred place, famous Telugu poet Bammera Potana wrote *Āndhra Bhāgavataṁ.* The sacred nature of this temple here is that the three idols of Kodaṇḍa Rāma, Sītā Devī and Lakṣmaṇa are monolithic and there is an idol of poet Bammera Potana in the same temple. There is inspiring idol of Hanumān, in the same complex. Due to monolithic nature of idols, Ontimitta

is known as *Eka Śilā Nagara*.

In this context, it is pertinent to add that *Rāmāyaṇam* is looked upon with great reverence even in Eastern and South-eastern countries like Indonasia, not to talk of Western countries. The *Rāmāyaṇam* ballet is performed in places like Bali, in a novel way. Ballets depicting monkey-armies of Hanumān and Sugrīva are staged on a mass scale. It appears the name of Bali derived its name from monkey—Vāli, similarly the name of the city Jakarta appears to have originated from Jaṭāyu in *Rāmāyaṇam*. Puppet shows on *Rāmāyaṇam* are a novelty in that small country.

Now let us have a brief sketch of Biography of Late Śrī Vavilukolanu Subbā Rāo (Vāsudeva Swāmī) who gave us a beautiful Gem of Gems of *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇam* in the shape of *Mandaram*.

Śrī Rāo was born in Cuddapah region in Andhra Pradesh, during the last quarter of ninteenth century in a *Paṇḍit's* family. His parents were late Śrī V. Rāma Candra Rāo and late Smt. V. Kanakammā. They were the poorest of the poor. Śrī Subbā Rāo was the middle one of three sons born to his parents. As cruelty of ill-fate would have it, his parents and brothers had premature deaths. Śrī Rāo's father died when Śrī Rāo was just eleven.

He was initiated in *Rāma-Mantraṁ* by his paternal uncle, when the former was just fifteen. He became an ardent devotee of Śrī Rāma. He was married. His wife was Smt. Raṅganāyakammā. He had no children. Cruel fate haunted him further and further. Besides becoming a widower, with no progeny, he became a victim of Tuberculosis. Due to extreme poverty, coupled with fearful T.B., his near and dear deserted him for obvious reasons.

Left for himself, the ailing Śrī Rāo invoked *Bhagawān Rāma*, in whom he had implicit and full faith. As God-sent, he gained a handful faithful friends, out of whom, one was an ardent devotee by name Śrī Koṭṭapallī Padmanābha Śāstrī. Śrī Śāstrī was instrumental in getting Śrī Rāo a Telugu *Paṇḍit's* job in Hindu college, Triplicane, Madras on a meagre petty

salary. As luck brightened, he secured a *Paṇḍit's* job in Presidency College of Madras on a higher salary.

Śrī Rāo was a highly talented person in Andhra Literature, besides being a Rāma's devotee. He performed *Sampūrṇa Rāmāyaṇa Paṭhanam,* as many as 108 times, during his stay at Ontimitta. After completion of 108 times, he performed *Sītā Rāma Kalyāṇam* and *Sāmrājya Paṭṭābhiṣekam,* at Ontimitta from the donations raised from devotees. In this connection an anecdote is worth being mentioned. When donations were solicited for performing *Kaiṅkaryam,* for Kodaṇḍa Rāma, a scheduled class person came forward, to the surprise of one and all at that time, and contributed handsome donations. Being inspired by the philanthropic attitude of the poor S.C. devotee, others offered liberal contributions. With these donations, Śrī Rāo dedicated his *Rāmāyaṇa Grantham* to Lord Kodaṇḍa Rāma at Ontimitta. He distributed golden *Maṅgal Sūtras* to *Suvāsinīs.*

While Śrī Rāo was at Nellore (A.P.), he had a nice dream. Two mendicants appeared in the dream and suggested Śrī Rāo to write *Rāmāyaṇam* in Telugu for common Good. The *Bhikṣus* were none other than *Bhagawān* Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Inspired by this dream, he took upon his head and authored the great epic against many odds.

Śrī Rāo alias Vāsudeva Swāmī wrote some more books such as:

1. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Abhyudayam
2. Śrī Kausalyā Pariṇayam
3. Bhagavad Gītā (Dwipada)
4. Śrī Subhadrā Vijaya Nāṭakamu
5. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Līlāmṛtamu
6. Ārya Caritra Ratnāvalī
7. Hita Caryā
8. Bhakta Prasūna Mālikā etc.

Now an *Āśramam* by name ***Śrī Kodaṇḍa Rāma Sevaka Dharma Samājam*** is run at Dasakuti in Angalakuduru near Tenali in Andhra Pradesh. Daily *Sītā Rāma Pūjās* and *Nitya*

Annadānam are done in this cottage. Books on *Rāmāyaṇam* are published and sold from this centre which does yeoman service, as is done by Gītā Press, Gorakhpur.

Śrī Rāo's biography shows that undaunted by his chronic T.B., and chronic illness, he could complete his Himalayan task of authoring *Mandaram,* inspired by Rāma's divine grace.



सौरज धीरज तेहि रथ चाका। सत्य सील दृढ़ ध्वजा पताका॥
बल बिबेक दम परहित घोरे। छमा कृपा समता रजु जोरे॥३॥
ईस भजनु सारथी सुजाना। बिरति चर्म संतोष कृपाना॥
दान परसु बुधि सक्ति प्रचंडा। बर बिग्यान कठिन कोदंडा॥४॥
अमल अचल मन त्रोन समाना। सम जम नियम सिलीमुख नाना॥
कवच अभेद बिप्र गुर पूजा। एहि सम बिजय उपाय न दूजा॥५॥
सखा धर्ममय अस रथ जाकें। जीतन कहँ न कतहुँ रिपु ताकें॥६॥

"Valour and fortitude are the wheels of that chariot, while truthfulness and good conduct are its enduring banner and standard. Even so strength, discretion, self-control and benevolence are its four horses, that have been joined to the chariot with the cords of forgiveness, compassion and evenness of mind. Adoration of God is the expert driver; dispassion, the shield and contentment, the sword. Again, charity is the axe; reason the fierce lance and the highest wisdom the relentless bow. A pure and steady mind is like a quiver; while quietude and the various forms of abstinence (*Yamas*) and religious observances (*Niyamas*) are a sheaf of arrows. Homage to the Brahmans and to one's own preceptor is an impenetrable coat of mail; there is no other equipment for victory as efficacious as this. My friend, he who owns such a chariot of piety shall have no enemy to conquer anywhere."

—*Mānasa*

Patita Pāvana Sītā Rāma

—K. D. Sanwal

Sky like blue
And crystal clear
Pretty, lovely
Sweet and dear
High and great
Bright and fair
None of them
Are nowhere near.

How is my lord?
How can I say?
Though we see Him
Night and day!
The peaky mountains
The jungles green
The rising sun
The setting scene
Things around us
Big and small
Tell something
But short they fall.

Rāma—the great
A word with ease
You may call
As you please

Not for one
He is for all.
Dot-like tiny
Sky-like tall!
Shapeless phantom
Still in form
Can't be checked
By any norm!

None above me—
Was Rāvaṇa proud
I am all and all
He said aloud
To shower the truth
And to set him right
He came on earth
With all the light
To punish the devil
The reason one
Virtue prevails
Crudity none.
Lest crimes should go
Beyond a line.
He throws on earth
A bit of shine.
Right from birth
As Daśaratha's boon
He played the sole
As poet's moon.
Pleasing to mother
As to inmates
A joy for all—
The big and the mates.

His love for brothers
And regard for teacher.
Ar'nt they still
Lasting features?
To obey the parents
And keep their words
They left the palace
And flew like birds.
In jungles they slept
On grass and earth
Those who had seen
Nothing like dearth!

Guha—the Niṣāda
Was plunged into thought
So much torture
By nature is wrought
Lakṣmaṇa—the brother
Made it plain
To accuse the wrongs
Is in vain!
Good or bad
We do in past
Matching results
They do cast
Such a note
Simple and pure
Must be doctor's
Dose for cure!

Let deep we go
Cool and calm.
Who are they?
Sītā Rāma

All the power
We see or conceive
Is his decimal
To be brief!
To be correct,
Still not a fair say
He is full
Even after take away!

And Sītā—the *Māyā*
His better part
His own nature
Yet apart!
Fairness, beauty
And all that glows
She is the source
From where it flows!
In any pain
A soothing balm.
Let us bank
On Sītā Rāma!

There may be question
Due and worth
Why the supremes
Came to earth!
Why not did they
From the top
Punish the devils
And up them mop!
It was but
For giving the way
That evils from
We can keep away.

As human beings
 They played the role
In plenty, dearth,
 Joy and dole.
In various stages
 How to live—
A holy counsel
 Don't they give?
Winning kings and lords
 By breaking the bow
Keeping thereby
 Janaka's vow,
At the point of
 Getting the throne.
When Daśaratha had
 Inclination shown
Thrill and excitement
 Not at all.
Well contained—
 As we call
Getting expulsion
 For fourteen years
Neither sorrow
 Nor any tears.
Trotting in jungles
 In sun and rain
Could not give them
 Any pain.
Themselves in trouble
 They did their duty
Killing monsters/helping saints
 See the beauty.

Odds may come
Or fortunes throng
Let us not forget
Right or wrong.
This is ever
The nature's call
The creators too
Accepted all.
Coming to earth
From the whole
To set example—
The purpose sole
It's as well as
A joyful play
All is well
Under Godly sway.

Ahalyā, Kewaṭa
Gīdha and Śabarī
Agastya, Śarabhaṅga
Sutīkṣṇa and Atri
All of them
And many more
Got a place
In his core
Even those who faulted
And were wrong
Who never bent—
Were so strong.
Got emancipation
At his hands
Divine Amnesty
Always stands.

Rāvaṇa—the villian
Tops the list
Beware of enticements
We must insist
When such is the master
All and all
Why not go in
Once for all!
With pure heart
If this is done
Sure! Sure!
We have won!

Hanumān—the great
Has given the way
Genial surrender
Will certainly pay.
Without any
Loss of time.
Let us busy
Sin and crime.
It will be
dotless white
A heaven on earth
A beautiful sight.
Not in tonnes
But a simple dram
Of Patita-Pāvana
Sītā-Rāma!



The Divinity of Lord Śrīrāma

—*P.Govindarajan*

The *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas* say that the Supreme *Brahman* descended on earth in various forms both animal and human, in different *Yugas* (ages) of which ten are counted as the most prominent. Even among the *Daśāvatāras* there are some minor differences and Northern recensions count Buddha as an *Avatāra* while the Southern recensions include Balarāma among the *Daśavatāra*. The Rāma and Kṛṣṇa *Avatāras* are considered as *Pūrṇa Avatāras* while some of the others are considered as *Aṁśāvatāras*. Where was the origin of the concept of *Avatāra* and on what basis should one consider a human form with supernatural abilities as an *Avatāra* of the Supreme *Brahman*? These two questions are considered in the following paragraphs.

In a significant passage in the oldest of all *Vedas* the *Ṛigveda*, the *Puruṣa Sūkta* hymn hints that the birthless *Puruṣa* takes several births through the words अजायमानो बहुधा विजायते. This concept is elaborated by the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* which says that the Supreme Lord Vāsudeva has five forms viz., *Para*, *Vyūha*, *Vibhava*, *Antaryāmin* and *Arcā* of which *Vibhavāvatāras* represent the descent of the Supreme Lord in human and other *Avatāras*. *Śrīmad Bhagawad Gītā* which is generally considered an amalgam of the *Upaniṣads* and the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* comes out with more details regarding the need for the Supreme to assume human form In the first few verses of Chapter IV of the *Gītā* the Lord declares that whenever there is serious harm to *Dharma*, the Lord descends in *Avatāras* to destroy the vicious and protect the virtuous in order to re-establish *Dharma*. From the above it can be seen that

the concept of *Avatāra* is Vedic in origin and has been fully supported by the *Pāñcarātra Āgama.* The epics and *Purāṇas* which are only supplemental to the *Vedas* deal more elaborately with the topic of *Avatāras* in their contents.

We come to the next question raised in the introductory paragraph viz., How can one know that a human form is an *Avatāra*? The reply is—through the actions of the *Avatāra* and the evidence recorded by highly pious and saintly souls who were either contemporaries or had direct evidence of the greatness of the *Avatāras*. In the Śrī *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma*, when Yudhiṣṭhira asks *Bhīṣma Pitāmaha* the question—Who is the one God to be worshipped—the reply is given in the form of one thousand names of Supreme Lord Vāsudeva and in the penultimate verse, Bhīṣma declares that the Supreme Lord is present in their midst as Devakī Nandana.

The devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa far exceed the devotees of Śrī Rāma as many consider Śrī Kṛṣṇa to be "*Bhagawān Swayam*", i. e., the Supreme Lord Himself. Among the Ālwārs of South, a majority were worshippers of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.Among the *Ācāryas*, Madhwācārya, Vallabhācārya, Caitanya Mahāprabhu to name a few, were ardent devotees of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The partiality of devotees to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is understandable as He lived barely five thousand years ago towards the close of *Dwāpara Yuga* and his various exploits during the childhood and later during the *Mahābhārata* war can move any devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa to tears for his relentless struggle against *Adharma*. His monumental contribution towards the re-establishment of *Dharma* in the form of *Śrīmad Bhagawad Gītā* containing the essence of both *Āgama* and *Nigama* proves beyond any shadow of doubt that He was *Bhagawān Swayam*. However, can the same be told of Śrī Rāma?

In this connection, it is worth recalling here an interesting conversation between two *Vaiṣṇava* saints. One of them was an ardent devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the other was of Lord Śrī Rāma.

The Kṛṣṇa devotee referred to the *saulabhya* (easy accessibility) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *Āśrita Vātsalya* (benevolence to devotees) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and said that the Lord himself undertook the task of becoming an emissary to go to Duryodhana's court and plead for the return of kingdom and the same cannot be said of Śrī Rāma. To this taunting insinuation the *Vaiṣṇava Ācārya* who was a devotee of Śrī Rāma is reported to have told that Lord Śrī Rāma was the son of Daśaratha *Cakravartī* (Supreme monarch) and there was no necessity for the Lord to assume the part of an emissary and given the opportunity He would certainly have played that role.

The devotees of Śrī Rāma like Tulasīdāsa, Kabīra, Saint Tyāgarāja etc., in their songs clearly bring out the divinity of Lord Śrī Rāma and show that He is none other than the Supreme Lord.

Let us take the *Atimānuṣa* (beyond human capability) acts of Lord Śrī Rāma which go to prove that He is an *Avatāra* of Supreme *Brahman*. The first incident which comes to one's mind is the *Ahalyā Śāpavimocana* i.e., the release of Ahalyā from curse. The mere touch of the Lotus Feet of the Lord from which has emanated Ganges during the *Trivikramaṇa Avatāra* could only have converted a mere stone into Ahalyā. The next incident which appeals to the devotees' mind is the breaking of the *Śiva Dhanuṣa* and marriage with Sītā Devī. Kamban, the Tamil poet, in his immortal classic says"*Eduthathu Kandaar, ittradu kettar*" i.e. people saw the bow being lifted and in split second they heard the sound of its breaking. When King Daśaratha was returning to Ayodhya from Mithila with his newly married sons, came Paraśurāma who challenged Lord Śrī Rāma with the Viṣṇu *Dhanuṣa*. The latter in all humility revealed his prowess and asked for the target which made Paraśurāma hang his head in shame. One more incident which proves the divinity of Lord Śrī Rāma is the grant of *Mokṣa* to Jaṭāyu. In the *Puruṣa Sūkta* hymn referred to earlier, the Supreme *Puruṣa* is described as "*utāmṛtatvasyeśānaḥ*" i.e.,the Lord who can give release. This shows that Lord Śrī Rāma who gave *Mokṣa*

to the bird Jatāyu was none other than the *Puruṣa* in the *Puruṣa Sūkta* hymn.

Apart from the incidents from Śrī Rāma's life which prove that He is the Supreme Lord, the verbal testimony of very eminent sages is also available in *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa* which goes to prove that He is *Bhagawān Swayam*. In the very first chapter of *Śrīmad Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* we have the question asked by sage Vālmīki and the reply furnished by *Devarṣi* Nārada that the one person who possesses all the sixteen qualities is the Lord Himself who has descended on earth as the son of Daśaratha. In the *Bāla Kāṇḍa,* we have the visit of Viśwāmitra who seeks the help of Daśaratha to peacefully perform his *Yāga* (sacrifice) and King Daśaratha stands crestfallen when the Sage Viśwāmitra asks for Lord Śrī Rāma. In reply to Daśaratha's pleadings,Sage Viśwāmitra says "*Aham vedmi*" i.e., I know who is your son. When Daśaratha consults Sage Vasiṣṭha, the sage who knew what was in store, asks Daśaratha to accede to Sage Viśwāmitra's request, as Sage Vasiṣṭha also knew the divinity of Lord Śrī Rāma. It is only the very noble and pious souls who can recognise the Supreme Lord in His *Avatāra* form. Lord Brahmā while blessing Sage Vālmīki said that as long as the mountains and oceans remain on earth, the *Rāmāyaṇa* will continue to inspire people. The very fact that The *Ādikāvya* continues to fascinate the minds of the devotees of Lord Śrī Rāma, proves that the truths contained in the great epic have eternal validity as the Hero of the epic is none other than the Supreme Lord Himself.

At a time when irreligion and immorality is the ruling order of the day, the younger generations should read the epic to ponder over its message and draw inspiration from the supreme sacrifices made by the various characters in the glorious epic.



The Ideal Life of Śrī Rāma

—*Om Prakash Dubey*

When the ten-headed mighty ruler of Lanka, Rāvaṇa's overwhelming power began to take unethical advantage by tyrannizing the sages and seers, the gods reached *Vaikuṇṭha*, the abode of Lord Viṣṇu, with earnest solicitations for speedy redress. They all urged the Lord to incarnate Himself and be born as the eldest son of Daśaratha, the monarch of Ayodhya, while His consort Lakṣmī should join Him in the mundane world to be known as Sītā, the daughter of Janaka, the king of Mithila.

Śrī Rāma is the *Puruṣottama*, the best among men. In the immortal words of the celestial saint Nārada: Śrī Rāma is "as profound as the ocean and as firm as the Himalayas. He is equal to Lord Viṣṇu in energy and equal to moon in brilliance. Verily He is "*Dharmo Vigrahavān*", the righteousness embodied. *Dharma* realizes its perfection in Him. He is God among men and man among immortals. Through His constant sufferings and arduous actions, Śrī Rāma imparts to mankind an eternal and essential message that the fulfilment of *Dharma*, not the pleasure-seeking, is the aim of life.

Various are the scriptures and varied are their canons. Then, what should the course for a man of action be? The categorical answer comes from the very depth of the fathomless knowledge of a righteous king:"*Mahā-Jano Yena Gataḥ sa Panthāḥ* (The path followed by the great must be our path)". But where shall we go to look for the great? The ideal life of Śrī Rāma is answer for mankind. The ideal life of Śrī Rāma has been from time immemorial a source of guidance, instruction and solace to the rich and the

poor, Hindus and Non-Hindus, the educated and the illiterate, young and old, men and women and indeed to every one.

In the world there are two types of *Niṣṭhā* (dedication): The *Brahma-Niṣṭhā* and the *Loka-Niṣṭhā*. The first makes one dedicated to the quest for the Supreme Spirit and the latter inspires one to be devoted to the public cause. Vasiṣṭha is *Brahma-Niṣṭha* where as Viśvāmitra is *Loka-Niṣṭha*. It is *Vasiṣṭha's* own *Niṣṭhā* that makes him Brahmā's son and it is Viśvāmitra's own *Niṣṭhā* that turns him to be the friend of the universe. Śrī Rāma assimilates in Himself both types of *Niṣṭhā*. Being indistinguishable from *Brahman* (all pervading Truth), He serves the people as His own Self and sets an excellent example of *Paramārtha* (selfless service) for the generations to come.

Śrī Rāma kills monstress Tādakā, the mighty mistress (*Vāsanā*-passion) of the *Kāma-Vana* (the forest of lust) and her wicked comrades and thereby protects Viśvāmitra's *Yajña*. While others persecute the supposed wrong-doers, the Master of Self shows compassion towards the sinners and completely changes their lives by a magic touch of His spotless character. The deliverance and restoration of petrified Ahalyā by Śrī Rāma always remains a source of inspiration. The downtrodden must be uplifted. Sinners must be redeemed.

King Daśaratha decides to install Rāma as prince regent, while the whole kingdom rejoices, a wicked maid arouses in Queen Kaikeyī a furious jealousy of Rāma. Taking advantage of two boons which the king once offered her, the queen asks King Daśaratha to place her son, Bharata, upon the throne and exile Rāma for fourteen years. It does not disturb Rāma. This proves how balanced Rāma is even in most unfavourable circumstances. Thus he stands as an ideal person. He happily departs from the court. His loving wife Sītā and His devoted brother, Lakṣmaṇa, decide to accompany Him. Rāma and Sītā keep their spirit up till the end of their lives. Their love stands the trials, Śūrpaṇakhā's

wanton beauty casts no spell on Rāma's placid mind.

To kill Rāvaṇa, the monster of materialism flourishing within the walls of Golden Lanka Śrī Rāma uses pure love and selfless service. His divine message gets through. People are roused from their deep slumber. Even the monkeys and bears join His side. Mighty Rāvaṇa, with his ten heads and twenty arms, succumbs to the tidal wave of simple faith and unadulterated purity. Physical and intellectual power is no match for the spiritual power that comes forth from the very core of the self. Śrī Rāma conquers Lanka, but He is not tempted by its wealth or splendour. He says: "*Jananī Janmabhūmiśca svargādapi Garīyasī* (The mother and the motherland are far better than paradise even)".

The ideal of Śrī Rāma and His divine consort guide us for ever and ever. If Śrī Rāma was born to redress the grievances of men, Sītā was born to redeem the women bondage in the harem of Lanka, by her lofty penance in the Aśoka grove of the demon-land of Lanka, Herself suffering in silence.

The union of Śrī Rāma with His divine consort Sītā is nothing else but the union of justice tempered with mercy.

The evolution of man towards godhead can progress only by detachment from material wealth and prosperity. Śrī Rāma acted thus in consonance with this principle and Bharata closely followed it. The trustee government of Ayodhya with all austerity and flawlessness of Bharata during Rāma's exile with Śrī Rāma's sandals as the emblem of sovereignty is unheard of in the history of the world.

The prince and the princess abdicated the kingdom betook themselves to forest life to alleviate the distress not only of the citizens of the land but also of the denizens of the forest, like Jaṭāyu, Sugrīva, Guha and Śabarī.

The much-debated episode of Vāli and Vibhīṣaṇa show that Rāma discarded His own allies when they swerved from the right path and hugged to his bosom even those from enemy camp if only they tread the path of virtue.



Variations in The Vālmīkīya Rāmāyaṇa, The Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa and The Rāma-Carita-Mānasa

—*Chandan Lal Dhody*

The events of The Rāma Story as in The *Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa,* The *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* (a part of The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* by Bhagavān Vyāsa Deva) and Gosvāmī Tulasī Dāsa's *Rāma-Carita-Mānasa* vary at some places on accont of the *Kalpa Bheda* (variations in some events of The Story in different *Kalpas*). "In numerous ways have the Eminent *Munis* sung Hari's beautiful pastimes varying in different *Kalpas.*" "*Kalpa* after *Kalpa*, The Lord descends and engages in fascinating pastimes of various varieties." Thus says the *R. C. M.* [I/33 (iv), 140 (i)]

It will be interesting to study some of the variations in the *V. R.* , *A. R.* and the *R. C. M.*:

(i) In the *V. R.* The Lord appears as the two-handed baby in the human frame. [I/18 (8—12)]. In the *A. R.* [I/3(13—19)] and the *R. C. M.* [I/192 (1)], He appears in His four-handed Viṣṇu Form, and, soon, assumes the human baby frame.

(ii) Neither the *V. R.* nor the *A. R.* has any account of the encounter of Rāma and Sītā in the royal garden of Mithila before the bow-breaking narrated in the *R. C. M.*

(iii) In the *V. R.* and the *A. R.*, Paraśurāma Mahārāja arrives when the marriage procession is on its way back from Mithila to Ayodhya. In the *R. C. M.*, he comes immediately after the bow-breaking at Mithila.

(iv) The *A. R.* says:

(a) Rāma is comfortably seated on the diamond throne in the piazza of the inner apartment of His palace. Sītā is swaying

a whisk of diamond-studded handle over Him....... Sage Nārada jī arrives to meet The Lord, and, after a philosophical conversation, submits: "Brahmā, The Venerable, has sent me to You, O The Greatest Raghu. Your descent is for slaying Rāvaṇa. But Daśaratha, Your father, is planning to invest You with royalty. Engrossed in governmental functions, if You happen to ignore Your mission to kill Rāvaṇa, Your promise to release the Earth of the burden of the wicked and the vices will remain unfulfilled. O The Emperor of emperors, let that promise be materialized. Ever true is Your resolve." Rāma hears Nārada Mahārāja, smiles and says: "Listen, please, Venerable Nārada......Whatever, have I promised that I shall certainly accomplish.......Losing no time, tomorrow I leave for the Daṇḍaka forest to accomplish My mission." (From the 1st Chapter of the 2nd Canto)

(b) Sītā wants to accompany Rāma to the forests. Presenting arguments in support of her proposal, She adds: "You would have heard many a *Rāmāyaṇa* from many pious and learned personalities. Tell me, please, if in any *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma went to the forests unaccompanied by Sītā. I will go with You to serve You. You will have in me a perfectly capable assistant." [From II/4 (64—80)] These conversations are not in the *V. R.* and the *R. C. M.*

(V) The *R. C. M.* has the devotional account of the boatman of Śṛṅgaverapura washing Rāma's Feet before letting Him get into his boat to cross the *Gaṅgā* on the onward journey to the forests. In the *A. R.*, the boatman of a village on the route from *Muni* Viśvāmitra's hermitage to Mithila, washed Rāma's Feet, when, accompanying the Eminent *Muni*, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were on Their way from Ayodhya to Mithila after having killed Tāṭakā, Subāhu and their followers. [I/6 (3—5)]

The *V. R.* is silent.

(VI) The *A. R.* narrates that when Rāma and Sītā were at Pañcavaṭī all by themselves, He said to Her: Glorious Lady!

Rāvaṇa will come to you disguised as a monk. You should, therefore, rest in the fire leaving behind your shadow to play your part. There you please stay for a year, and join Me when Rāvaṇa stands killed." Acting accordingly, Sītā entered the fire leaving a fake Sītā outside the cottage. [III/7(1—4)]

The *R. C. M.* has this account as below:

When Lakṣmaṇa Jī has gone deep into the forest to fetch tubers, fruit and beets, The Lord, The Fountain of benevolence and bliss, laughs and speaks to Janaka's Daughter: "Listen darling! Wedded to exalted vows and gloriously gentle are you. I propose playing a subtle role in this human frame. The night-wanderers shall I annihilate. Meanwhile, in Fire you please reside."

No sooner had Rāma explained all than She merged in Fire firmly establishing The Lord's Feet at heart. She kept there Her shadow, exactly similar in gentleness, beauty and glorious humility. Even Lakṣmaṇa remained unaware of the mysterious plan devised by Rāma The All-Opulent. [III/23 (Dohā) and 24 (i-ii)]

This episode is not in the *V. R.*

(vii) In the *R. C. M.* while advising Rāvaṇa for the 4th and the last time against the war, Mandodarī says: "Rāma's younger brother drew a small line which you dared not cross. Such is your heroism? [VI/36(i)]. This refers to the line drawn by Lakṣmaṇa outside the cottage at Pañcavaṭī before he went to "help" Rāma at Sītā's command. This line had miraculous power. Anyone crossing it from outside would have been shattered to pieces. As Rāvaṇa realised the mysterious power of the line, he dared not enter in. Disguised as a monk, he begged Sītā for alms and requested Her to come out to make the offering.

V. R. and the *A. R.* do not mention this event.

(viii) According to the *V. R.* [VI /101 (i-ii)] Lakṣmaṇa was wounded and rendered unconscious by Rāvaṇa. Hanumān was advised by Suṣeṇa an important personality in Sugrīva's army,

to bring the medicinal herb.

The *A. R.* narrates this episode as below:

Rāvaṇa had with him also the formidable spear gifted by demon Maya. He darted it towards Vibhīṣaṇa. Lakṣmaṇa noticed the deadly spear flying towards Vibhīṣaṇa, and observed: 'Vibhīṣaṇa enjoys Rāma's patronage; he must not get killed.' Atonce he stood ahead of Vibhīṣaṇa remaining firm as mountain, That energised spear hit Lakṣmaṇa, The Incarnation of Śeṣa, The Fountain of Energy, ... Inspite of its tremendous magical force, the spear failed to harm Lakṣmaṇa. Playing, however, as was he the human role, he intentionally became unconscious and dropped down.[VI/6 (5—10)]

Rāma asked Hanumān to bring the medicinal herb. [VI/6 (32—34)]

Hanumān reached the Milky Ocean, scanned Mount Mandarācala, but could not locate the needed herb. He uprooted the hill, held it up, flew fast as the wind, presented himself before Rāma, and submitted: "God of gods! I have brought the hill. Let the needful be done without any delay." The Lord brought the herb from the hill, and had Lakṣmaṇa "cured" by Suṣeṇa the physician. [From VI/7 (34—39)]

The *R. C. M.* has this episode as below:

Meghanāda hurls the energised spear; it hits Lakṣmaṇa at the chest. He swoons. [VI/54 (iv)]

Extremely distressed is The Lord to find the younger brother in this state. Jāmbavanta suggests: "By the name Suṣeṇa is a doctor in Laṅkā. Someone should be despatched to fetch him." Assuming a tiny form, Hanumān goes and atonce brings him together with his house. On arrival, Suṣeṇa bows head at Rāma's feet. He prescribes a medicinal herb, and tells the name of the hill where it could be found.

Addressig Hanumān, he says: "Go, O the Wind's Son,and birng it please." [VI/55(iii, iv and *Dohā*)] With Rāma's Lotus Feet established at heart, the Wind's Son leaves assuring that

no problem is this. [VI/56(i)] He inspects the mountain but cannot locate the herb. At once he uproots the hill, and carries it. [VI/58(iv)]

(ix) The Rāma Story of the *R. C. M.* ends with the description of Rāma's coronation, Rāma Rājya and some other relevant events. It remains silent about Sītā's banishment and Her stay at Sage Vālmīki's hermitage. The *V. R.* and the *A. R.* have detailed account of this episode.

The *A. R.* says:

Once, Rāma was happily resting in the pleasure-room of His personal apartment in the palace......Sītā was gently pressing His Feet. She said to Him: "Glorious Lord! the gods have had an audience with me. .... Submitted they: 'Leaving The Vaikuṇṭha...., The Lord is enjoying His stay on the Earth with You, His Energy, The Mother of the universe. He can never be away from You. If You return to The Vaikuṇṭha, He will follow You. Blessed will we be.' I have conveyed Your Grace what they said. Please do as You think proper. I can't command You." Rāma pondered a little while and observed: "Glorious Lady! I am already aware of this, and tell You the course I propose to adopt. With a calumny against You as the handle,.....I shall 'desert' You and despatch You to the forest. ..... Near Sage Vālmīki's hermitage.....,You will give birth to two sons. In due course of time, You will come to Ayodhya. To convince the people of Your chastity, You will enter the Earth through a suddenly formed cleft and reach The Vaikuṇṭha. Shortly afterwards, I too will be there. Let this be Our definite plan." [From VII/4(30—44)]



Coronation of Śrī Rāmacandra

—Prof. D. Vaidyanathan

There are four of *Yugas*; which cycle perpectually—*Satya Yuga, Tretā Yuga, Dwāpara Yuga* and *Kali Yuga;* and as the *Yugas* proceed from *Satya* to *Kali,* religion and the good qualities of men and women gradually decline meaning thereby, *Dharma* declines and *Adharma* gains the upperhand; and when things reach a zenith, Lord Viṣṇu incarnates to destroy *Adharma* and to re-establish *Dharma:*

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे॥

(*Gītā* IV. 8)

Rāma Avatāram—

Śrī Rāma, one of the two most popular incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu, comes as the seventh in the series. His story is too well-known to need any repetition. He typifies the very ideal person; and His story, the *Rāmāyaṇa* has now become an immortal epic. His name is known as the *Tāraka Mantra*—the *Mantra* that takes one across the ocean of transmigration.

Departure for Nandigrāmam and reunion—

After destroying Rāvaṇa in the Epic war between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, Rāma asked Lakṣmaṇa to crown Vibhīṣaṇa as the king of Lanka. This being done. Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa in the *Puṣpaka Vimāna* of Kubera returned to Nandigrāma—a suburb of Ayodhya alongwith the *Vānaras* headed by Sugrīva; Jāmbavān, Aṅgada and Hanumān; and where only Bharata was waiting for the return of his brother and others. Soon, they were in the presence of the three queen mothers—Kausalyā, Sumitrā and Kaikeyī.

Bharata then placed the *Pādukās* (Sandals) close to Rāma's feet and said thus—

"O, custodian of *Dharma,* this Your Kingdom, which You left to my care fourteen years ago, I return to You. Please accept it and be enthroned as the king of Ayodhya."

Śatrughna then asked Sumantra to bring the royal chariot. They then requested Śrī Rāma and Sītā to take their seats in the chariot. Bharata sat beside Sumantra and took the reins in his hand. Lakṣmaṇa held the royal white umbrella; while Śatrughna and Vibhīṣaṇa took up the white *Camaras* and waved them from either side. From Nandigrāma the chariot then moved towards Ayodhya while cries like victory to Śrī Rāma rent the air throughout the journey.

The procession thus started soon reached the royal palace. Śatrughna then informed their royal preceptor sage Vasiṣṭha that everything was ready for the coronation or *Paṭṭābhiṣekam.*

Rāma and Sītā were made to sit on the bejwelled throne by Vasiṣṭha at the auspicious time. The coronation function began in all enthusiasm. One after another from Vasiṣṭha, Vāmadeva, Gautama etc., besides several other *Ṛṣis* poured the fragrant coronation water over Rāma and Sītā; others like the Vedic scholars, Army chief; and many other notable personalities also took part in the process. All these things happened chanting the *Vedas* with the proper accents not only in force then but now also current with no change whatsoever despite the passage of time—the greatest asset of Hinduism indeed.

The ceremonial bath—*Abhiṣekam* as it is called, was over. Vasiṣṭha then took the royal crown (worn by Manu, the son of Sun-god—the first progenitor of the royal family—*(Ikṣwāku Vaṁśa)* and placed it on Rāma's head chanting the appropriate *Mantras* befitting the occasion; and the coronation was over to the rejoicings of one and all present there. *Jaya Vijayī Bhava*—victory to Śrī Rāmacandra once again rent the air around him. Thus began the benign rule of Rāma in Ayodhya

with Bharata as *Yuvarāja* to help him in the administration.

After the coronation, many sages visited Ayodhya, headed by Agastya. They all congratulated Rāma on his mission having been fulfilled. He received many presents on the occasion; and He also gave presents to one and all present there. Among those who received presents were Vibhīṣaṇa who got the *Kulādhāna* of *Ikṣwāku* dynasty—*Raṅga Vimāna* (which we see even today at Srirangam temple in Trichy district, Tamilnadu, South India). Sugrīva, Jāmbavān, Aṅgada and others were also given suitable presents. Lastly, Rāma presented a pearl necklace to Sītā, which she with His permission gave to Hanumān in all happiness; and after the presentation ceremony, all took leave of Rāma and departed to their homes with overflowing joy and happiness.

Śrī Rāma ruled the country for a long time to come; and the reign like that the world had never seen; and will never see again. Peace and plenty were found everywhere; and all Rāma's subjects were happier than ever; and they all also lived for a long time. The seasons never failed; the land yielded crops in abundance. Trade flourished; and people had everything in plenty. There were no thefts anywhere; and there was no sign of internal troubles at all. Everyone was happy and contented—all these because of the righteous reign of Śrī Rāmacandra; and for the *Ayodhyāvāsīs,* it seemed that heaven was on earth *(Bhūloka Vaikuṇṭham)* because of Rāma's reign—*Rāmarājya;* and I conclude—

वामे भूमिसुता पुरश्च हनुमान्पश्चात्सुमित्रासुतः
शत्रुघ्नोभरतश्च पार्श्वदलयोर्वाय्वादि कोणेषु च।
सुग्रीवश्च विभीषणश्च युवराट् तारासुतो जाम्बवान्
मध्ये नीलसरोजकोमलरुचिं रामं भजे श्यामलम्॥



Rāmakathā—How Historical and How Traditional

—*C. S. Mahadevan*

In the grand continuum—featuring the three illusory aspects of Creation, Sustenance and Destruction—experienced as the world-events in countless millions of crores happen, appear for a flickering moment, dazzling and glittering like spray on tops of ocean waves blown by wind and storm, only to disappear leaving not even a trail or memory. It will be pertinent to observe that events at best have relevance only contemporaneously. Yet some events are revolutionary as they inhere in themselves and are in resonance with the subjective inner spiritual urges and propensities of the multitude of peoples involved. In this sense the more spiritually elevating, universal, highly evolved, transcendental and consummative such urges are, the more vibrant and surging becomes the impact of the event maturing into a spontaneous renaissance that energises and propels the evolutionary pilgrimage of mankind for generations to come. Existence at the Intellectual and Bliss (विज्ञानमय and आनन्दमय)planes of consciousness gets a boost and human beings endeavour to reach the far flung horizons of spiritual awareness.

In the case of the everlasting deep impressions left on humanity by an incarnation of God, where the focal hero is the *Paramātmā* (Supreme Lord) Himself, who takes the form of purity/Bliss Absolute (शुद्धसत्त्वानन्दरूप) say—as in the case of *Rāma Avatāra*—historicity has no authenticatory relevance, as the values involved transcend materialistic and sensuous considerations, partaking the characteristics of Eternity. No doubt, for a humble student *Rāmāyaṇa* may yield some historical data, but how far

such data will conform to modern tests of historical veracity is a moot question; for, *Rāmāyaṇa* was not intended or meant to be historical record; on the contrary, it is a narrative of accounts of the exploits of the Lord, who now and then incarnates in the world as a means to encourage, revive and re-establish devotional and liberational pursuits. *Rāmāyaṇa,* or for that matter all *Purāṇas,* does not record events in any order or detail acceptable to modern historians and because of the mind-boggling magnitude of time lapse, to connect and interpret events is of doubtful prospects, let alone the difficulties in crossing over the hurdles of what may appear to moderns as biological monstrocities and sociological abominations. Archaeologists are the arbiters in this exercise and relics will have to be dressed up before presentation in their own dressing- rooms where varied prejudices, fancied impressions and deliberate distortions are the cosmetics and costumes. If the events related to only material achievements, sensuous and athiestic, devoid of any spiritual inclinations, the impact will be conditioned by space-time limitations, fated to disappear tracelessly in the dim past. Scientific discoveries, however awe-inspiring, thrilling, admirable, intelligent and laudable, which augment and emphasize materialistic aspect of human life, are no doubt deserving of our appreciation, but by the very nature of it, they are ephemeral and transitory, incapable of acquiring dimensions beyond space and time. At best these take us to high levels of sophisticated animalism entangling us in rank athiesm with disastrous consequences.

Any event that uplifts mankind and encourages spiritual value helping humanity on its onward pilgrimage for attainment of liberation and enlightenment will survive the onslaught of time, vibrating and energising, as it represents eternal values. The validity of such events—like *Rāma Avatāra*—thus extends beyond the limited parameters of history and survives as a tradition nurtured by saints, sages, philosophers and the hordes of ordinary humans steeped in plain devotion. It will not be

out of place to quote below 2/3 *Ślokas* from *Śrī Rāma Hṛdayam* as to who Rāma is:—

रामं विद्धि परं ब्रह्म सच्चिदानन्दमद्वयम्।
सर्वोपाधिविनिर्मुक्तं सत्तामात्रमगोचरम्॥

Know that Rāma is the highest *Brahman*—Existence-Knowledge and Bliss, without second, free from all conditioning factors, the only reality and not visible (to the mind and senses).

आनन्दं निर्मलं शान्तं निर्विकारं निरञ्जनम्।
सर्वव्यापिनमीशानं स्वप्रकाशमकल्मषम्॥

The (highest) bliss, free from blemishes, the (highest) tranquillity, free from changes, unstained, all pervading, the supreme soul self-illumined and sinless.

स्वमायया कृत्स्नमिदं हि सृष्ट्वा
नभोवदन्तर्बहिरास्थितो यः।
सर्वान्तरस्थोऽपि निगूढ आत्मा
स्वमायया सृष्टमिदं विचष्टे॥

Having created the entire (Universe) with his Māyā, he remains within and without in the manner of the sky. Though he dwells in all, yet, he is the mysterious soul. He sets into motion this (Universe) created by him, with his own *Māyā*.

Any tendency to dismiss *Rāma Avatāra* as pure fiction on the ground of paucity of historical evidence will be a deplorable error. Rāma has influenced several generations over millions of years and no fiction writer, however celebrated he might be can invest his hero with such divine powers as experienced by the devotees of Rāma, which continues even to-day and will go on forever. The supreme Lord Mahāviṣṇu has incarnated and born in the Solar Dynasty and lived the life of an ideal man, setting an example to all forever. *Rāmāyaṇa* is thus factual, otherwise no tradition could have arisen with Rāma at its core.



Rāma Nāma

—Bajaranga Das

The Mantra—

Mahāmantra 'Rāma' is the most powerful *Mantra* in this Universe. The *Mantra* is more powerful than Lord Rāma, Himself. Lord Rāma was present in *Tretā* and helped the people who somehow approached Him. But the *Mahāmantra* has helped innumerable people before and after incarnation of Rāma. Today you cannot find Rāma but the name is there and people are solving their problems with the help of the name.

Mahātmā Gāndhī is quoted to have said that he was surprised to know how people do without *'Rāma Nāma'*. It was not possible for him to do without it for a single day. All great saints, like Tulasīdāsa, Kabīra, Nānaka, Dādū have realised importance and power of the name and written about it at many places.

Now I want to go to The *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa*. Probably I am committing a mistake of repetition but:

सब जानहिं प्रभु महिमा सोई। तदपि कहे बिनु रहा न कोई॥

In beginning of *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa* Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa has explained importance and power of the name. The name is easy to repeat and can give both worldly benefits and freedom from bondage of the world. In fact, if you want to get rid of desire or *Vāsanā* you will have to first experience it and learn that it is shortlived and meaningless. This experience may or may not be of this life. But one cannot simply bypass this process. It is also very likely that, once in the mess, you may not like to come out of it like the insect that enjoys living in cowdung. However if you inter with help of the Name, it will be always there for your rescue.

सुमिरिअ नाम रूप बिनु देखे। आवत हृदय सनेह बिसेषे॥
नाम रूप गति अकथ कहानी। समुझत सुखद न परति बखानी॥

The logical mind, the rational mind is not ready to accept something that it cannot see or feel. But the journey with *Rāma Nāma* is different from that. Even to start with, you must have faith, you must have devotion. There is no logic, no questioning, only complete surrender to the *Nāma*. This cannot be done with effort. This is done only with the grace of Rāma. Be grateful that you have been granted some inclination towards the *Nāma*. If any respect for the name has come in your mind, do not waste time. Start from now. The rest will follow, however that is not for you to bother. Leave it to Him. Have courage. Try it once.

The *Nāma* is undisputed *Mahāmantra*. Relation between the *Nāma* and God Rāma cannot be explained. How can you explain sweetness to a person who has never tasted it. Explanation will only lead to wrong conclusion. And if you are really interested, take risk, jump into it. You cannot resolve the problem without living it.

राम नाम निज औषधि, काटै कोटि विकार।
विषम व्याधि तें ऊबरै, काया कंचन सार॥

(Dādū)

For Dādū *Rāma Nāma* is one's own medicine. The medicine that we know, normally removes two-three problems of the body. But this extraordinary medicine can remedy crores of problems. This removes all the anomalies from your body and mind. One gets relieved from imbalance. Life becomes full of music and self control. You need not impose control upon yourself. It automatically comes to you. Anything that creates imbalance in your life or living automatically goes away from you. And this relief is permanent, natural. There is no place for fear or anxiety.

'काया कंचन सार' Your body is made of *Pañcatattva*. But it is never stable. It is changing every moment. And so it is not durable. It can perish any moment. When Gold is heated in oven all the dirt, the things that are rubbish get burnt and what

remains is pure Gold. Similarly the *Nāma* removes all perishable things from you and you experience a permanent golden body that is eternal.

The name is not only for great saints. It is available for everybody. To feel power of the *Nāma* you need not do meditation. Simply make a resolve, have faith and respect for the *Nāma* and proceed. I am a normal human being with almost all human weaknesses. But I have successfully experimented with the *Nāma* for worldly things. Come on, you are blessed to have inclination towards the *Nāma* start from now.

श्रीराम जय राम जय जय राम



यत्तदद्रेश्यमग्राह्यमगोत्रमवर्ण-
मचक्षुःश्रोत्रं तदपाणिपादम्।
नित्यं विभुं सर्वगतं सुसूक्ष्मं
तदव्ययं यद्भूतयोनिं परिपश्यन्ति धीराः॥

"(By the higher knowledge) the wise realize everywhere that which cannot be perceived and grasped, which is without source, features, eyes, and ears, which has neither hands nor feet, which is eternal, multiformed, all-pervasive, extremely subtle, and undiminishing, and which is the source of all."

—*Muṇḍakopaniṣad* (I. 1.6)

देहमूलमिदं दुःखं देहः कर्मसमुद्भवः॥
कर्म प्रवर्तते देहेऽहंबुद्ध्या पुरुषस्य हि।
अहङ्कारस्त्वनादिः स्यादविद्यासम्भवो जडः॥

"This body is the basic cause of sufferings and the body on its term is the product of our past deeds. When the person associates his ego with the body at that very moment the deeds are activated. The ego is beginningless, innert and a product of *Avidyā*."

—(*A.R. Kiṣ*. 8. 12-13)

Jaṭāyu Mokṣa

—*Visnupriyan*

Siddha Puruṣas in South India, often refer to *Ṛṣis' Rāmāyaṇa* and *Ṛṣis' Mahā Bhārata*, which are said to be the real, complete versions of the *Purāṇas*. What we know of these epic *Kāvyas*, is only part, and hence incomplete. One living *Siddha* named, Guru Maṅgala Gandharva, inheriting the *Sage Agasthya Pītha*, has been enriching the spiritual ambience of south India with interesting *'Agastya Grantha Nāḍī'* revelations. This humble writer wishes to prostrate at the holy feet of this Swāmī, for the matter recorded below.

The arresting opening scene for this writing, reveals Jatāyu in severe penance, invoking Lord Śiva. The why and what for is indeed an eyeopener to humans! The mighty Vulture of the *Tretā Yuga,* with the satisfaction at the rarest opportunity of a birth in the earth, was actually praying for the effective use of such a birth in the service of the Lord! Is it not true that 'Only by His grace does one bow at His feet'? If a vulture had this wisdom, to what heights should man, boasting of a superior sixth sense, ascend in the spiritual Ladder?

If we were to attempt a penance, we will be damanding of the Lord, this or that possession!! Lord Śiva, pleased at the selflessness of the bird's spiritual exercise, presented Himself earlier than normal and directed the bird to *Devī Pūjā* but before spelling out the details, ascertained Jatāyu's desire. Jatāyu requested Lord Śiva's benign grace for transcending the mental mode of differentiating between Śiva and Viṣṇu, so that he could perform service of the one and Only God. Jatāyu went

further and pleaded for its death at Lord Śiva's hand (through Śiva's weapon) and salvation through Viṣṇu's hand!!

Lord Śiva smiled and commending the spiritually ennobling approach of Jatāyu, directed it to adore Him as Śankara Nārāyaṇa. Towards this end, Jatāyu was guided to propitiate the *'Śakti'* form of Goddess Gomatī, every friday with *'Kāvadi'* of pea-nuts! 'Only the adoration of Goddess Gomatī can explain the concept of Śankara Nārāyaṇa, enabling one to transcend the duality of Śiva-Viṣṇu', said Lord Śiva, before disappearing from the vision of Jatāyu.

Jatāyu undertook Goddess *Gomatī's Upāsanā,* every friday, at the various places where she dwells. Even today, in the temple pillars of Goddess Gomatī, in South India, engraving of a vulture may be noticed. In fact, it is considered a good omen to sight a vulture on a friday from a Gomatī temple! *Siddhas* recommend taking of peanuts *'Kāvadi'* on friday in Goddess Gomatī Temple, for success in completing a good act as also to obtain relief from severe diseases. The peanuts must be made into porridge and this drink must be distributed to the poor and needy, usually outside the temples.

Both Jatāyu and his brother Sampāti, lived for aeons. Goddess Gomatī appeared before Jatāyu and said: "Jatāyu! *Sarveśwara* will grant your wishes in the *'Tretā Yuga',* when Rāma Incarnation will take place. Śrī Śaṅkara Nārāyaṇa Himself will initiate you in the *Rāma Tāraka Mantra.* Viṣṇu Incarnate Rāma will establish a number of *Śivaliṅgas* and propagate the significance of *Śiva Pūjā.* In Kashi, Lord Śiva Himself utters *Rāma Nāma 'Tāraka mantra'* in the ears of the dying. Hari and Śiva are indeed one! The work of propagating this message (of unity in duality) is earmarked for you, as your service to God". Thus did Goddess Gomatī bless Jatāyu.

Another connected episode involving Rāvaṇa is relevant. Rāvaṇa performed an austere penance once, to invoke Lord Śiva. When the Lord appeared before him, Rāvaṇa sought a

weapon that would vanquish men, Divinities and Incarnations. Lord Śiva gave a sword named 'Candrahāsa' to fulfill Rāvaṇa's demand, but with the following conditions:

1) The sword should not be used against Weak adversaries in '*Adharmic*' way;

2) This sword could be used only once.

3) After drawal of the sword and use once, its power would become useless.

Even after this, continuing his *'Tapasyā'*, Rāvaṇa obtained another boon to the effect that *Devas, Asuras* or Divinities could not kill him! By sheer arrogance, he omitted mention of men, in this boon! Hence it is that Śrī Rāma took incarnation as a human being.

Readers are well aware of the episode of Sītā's abduction by Rāvaṇa and the valiant battle waged by the aging Jatāyu to recover Sītā. In the rage of the battle, quite unmindful of the stipulations by Lord Śiva for the use of his sword 'Candrahāsa', Rāvaṇa used the sword to fell Jatāyu in an *'Adharmic'* manner. In the ultimate battle with Śrī Rāma, this sword, therefore, was a mere mute witness!

Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, while searching for Sītā, came across the grievously hurt Jatāyu and saluted its brave effort. Rāma,—the Incarnation of Viṣṇu, performed the obsequies for Jatāyu, thereby granting *'Mukti'* to the valiant vulture. This narration is clearly depicted in the Ṛṣi's *Rāmāyaṇa.*

For those that study the *'Jatāyu Mokṣa'* episode and for those that narrate this to others, the pinnacle of *Śankara-Nārāyaṇa Bhakti,* without the *'Śiva-Viṣṇu Bheda',* is assured, according to the *Siddhas 'Phala Śruti'*! In fact, in Tamil language, the staple food Rice is called *'Arisi'*, which is an acronym for 'Ari' (Hari) + Si (Śiva)!



Importance of Rāma Nāma

—Prof. K. L. Bhalla

राम रामेति रामेति रमे रामे मनोरमे।
सहस्त्रनाम तत्तुल्यं रामनाम वरानने॥

Bhagawān Śiva says to Pārvatījī, "*Rāma Nāma* is equal to a thousand *Nāmas*. It is my life-breath." According to the *Rāmāyaṇa*—

जासु नाम सुमिरत इकबारा।
उतरहिं नर भव सिंधु अपारा॥

Gāndhījī wrote in his Autobiography--"For perfection or freedom from error comes only from grace and so seekers after God have left us *'Mantras'*, such as *Rāma Nāma* hallowed by their austerities and charged with their purity. "It is laid down in *"Sukhmani Sāhib"—Nāma* sustains the animal life. It supports the parts and the whole of the universe."

In *Guru Grantha Sāhib* much stress is laid on the chanting of Nāma. According to the *Japjī*—

'Those who kept the *Nāma* always in their hearts,
their toil shall be over,
And their faces shall reflect glory,
Nānaka, in their company many others,
too, shall be saved.'

राम नाम उर में गेओ ताके सम न कोए।
जे सिमरत संकट मिटे दरस तुम्हारो होए॥

These are the concluding lines of *Guru Grantha Sāhib*. Chanting of *Rāma Nāma* can bring about complete transformation. Of course there are obstacles such as lust, greed and anger which disturb our mind. This makes us restless. Mind can be brought

under control by practice and non-attachment. The repetition of *Rāma Nāma* with devotion can work miracles. There are many stories of saints and even householders which prove that *Rāma Nāma* is all powerful and can cleanse our mind that leads to God's realisation:

'श्री राम जय राम जय जय राम'

This is *'Mahāmantra'*, Samarth Swāmī Rāmadāsa chanted this thirteen crore times and attained *'Siddhi'*. In recent times Swāmī Satyānanda propagated *Rāma Nāma*. In the opinion of *Bhakta* Haṁsarāja, a disciple of Swāmījī 'while remembering *Rāma Nāma* one must have faith that this *Nāma* will help one to reach the destination. Chanting *Rāma Nāma* coupled with restraint and discrimination can lead one to salvation.'

There are *Śrī Rāma Śaraṇam Āśramas* at Delhi, Ludhiana, Gwalior, Panipat, Jammu and other places where hundreds of devotees gather for *'Sādhanā'*.

'तारक मंत्र राम है
जिस का सुफल अपार।
इस मंत्र के जाप से
निश्चय बने निस्तार'॥

(*Amṛta Vānī*)

As per 'स्कन्दपुराण'

अशने शयने पाने गमने चोपवेशने।
सुखे वाप्यथवा दुःखे राममन्त्रं समुच्चरेत्॥

Rāma Mantra is to be uttered while eating, drinking, sleeping, walking and sitting. By doing so one gets rid of all troubles, physical and mental. When every hope is gone, when friends fail and comforts flee, one finds solace in God's name. With the help of *Rāma Śabda Kuṇḍalinī Śakti* is awakened. If we want to end the cycle of birth and death, we should take refuge in Rāma.

A devotee should not lose heart but go on practising *Rāma Nāma*.The richest treasure of life is *'Bhakti'*. There are various

methods of devotion. It is not possible to undertake प्राणायाम and such other practices these days. The simplest method is to repeat *Rāma Nāma.*

'रमन्ते योगिनोऽस्मिन् इति रामः' Rāma stands for All Pervading Spirit. The question arises why we are not aware of this 'Spirit'. The answer is—we are led astray because of ignorance. We are conscious all the time of the outward world. If we look within, we can realise our real self. This is possible with the grace of *Guru.* What *Guru* says is the immortalising word. It is to be read day and night as the Name of God. True *Guru* reveals the name that is hidden.

If a man wants to proceed towards perfection and wash himself clean of sins, he should practise the love of *Rāma Nāma.* He is to realise, step by step, the presence of Lord until he becomes one with Him. Our doings are being watched over by the Supreme Judge. The end of all our actions is to please Him. Those who succeed in doing so get a seat in His loved presence, and those who do not are cast far away.

Nāma is the best medicine for all ailments. It is conceded that the bodily diseases are the result of mental disorders. To-day almost everybody complains of one or the other trouble. Despite the discoveries of new medicines, our afflictions are increasing day by day. It must be understood that we can be free from all disorders if we purify our mind by means of *Rāma Nāma.*

This is the age of corruption and pollution. There is noise everywhere—inside the house and outside especially in big cities. Everyday newspapers are full of stories relating to murder, violence, and discontentment. Only *Rāma Nāma* can save us. Let us pledge to chant *Nāma* daily and request others to do so. In this way we can usher in an era of peace and prosperity.

'हरे राम हरे राम राम राम हरे हरे'



Rāma—The Virtuous Stand

(For the purity of life)

—Shastri Chandrashekhar

Some time back, addressing a club meeting a muslim speaker emphasised that the three gods—Śiva, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are at the root of the Indian culture. Let us examine and explore this statement.

Śiva as Kāśī Viśvanātha, the Lord of the Universe, Permanently resides at Varanasi, the cultural capital of India. As *Digambara* his static position signifies space. As *Mahākāla* his dyna- state is time, as he starts his journey from Kailasa in the Himalaya and takes the eastern route to reach Rāmeśvaram on the shore of the Indian ocean. Taking the western route he continues his journey back to Kailasa. Thus Śiva does *Pradakṣiṇā* (circumambulation) of the *Deva Bhūmi,* the land of the gods, which in the North is surrounded by the Himalaya, the highest mountain range on earth and in the south, by the Hindamahāsāgara, the only ocean to be known by the name of a country. Thus Śiva prepares and protects the ground for the life to manifest and to flower according to *Dharma.*

The *Deva Bhūmi* is blessed by Viṣṇu, the preserver of life who incarnates here. His two main incarnations Rāma and Kṛṣṇa uphold *Dharma,* the law of humanity, and help the Indian culture to flourish. Culture maketh man cultured, necessary to be the foundation of a harmonious and happy human society.

Rāma is the hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* the book of humanity composed by *Ṛṣi* Vālmīki, the first poet of the World. According to *Rāmāyaṇa* Rāma, the Prince of Ayodhya starts his journey from the foot of the Himalaya and after crossing the Vindhya

ranges goes as far as Lanka, the golden island in the Indian Ocean. Thus Rāma unites the northern plains and the Deccan plateau bringing unity and harmony of the country, a must for existence and development.

Kṛṣṇa is the hero of the *Mahābhārata,* the most voluminous book of mankind compiled by *Ṛṣi* Vyāsa. Kṛṣṇa, the king of Kings, starts his journey from Dvārikā in the west and going east reaches Kamarupa at the other end of the country. He works for the peace and prosperity of India on the foundation laid by Rāma. Thus we find Rāma and Kṛṣṇa as the force of our culture, its source being Śiva.

After editing the *Vedas* in four parts Vyāsa compiled *Mahābhārata* because the knowledge of the *Vedas* was not within the reach of the commoners. As such *Mahābhārata,* which is full of knowledge, is called the fifth *Veda.* It is said—What is not in *Mahābhārata* is also nowhere. The two epics are the two sides of a coin called *Dharma.* While *Rāmāyaṇa* purifies our thought in the right direction, *Mahābhārata* guides our actions on the path of life.

Even after millennia there is no change in the contents of *Mahābhārata.* But the same is not the case with *Rāmāyaṇa* which has been retold and rewritten at different times and places. From the Black sea to the Yellow sea every country has its *Rāmāyaṇa* in its regional language. The life sketch of Rāma as given by *Ṛṣi* Vālmīki considerably changed as it travelled in time and space. But the main theme and its purpose has remained intact. It is the defeat of the vice when it faces virtue. Therefore the *Rāmāyaṇa* prepares us for a life worth living.

Of all the questions related to life the two 'why' and 'how' are most significant. 'Why' is related to motive and denotes space and 'how' to method signifying time. Rāma answers the question—why to live, and Kṛṣṇa, how to live. Therefore, *Maryādā Puruṣottama* Rāma is the first step towards a virtuous life, upon which *Yogeśvara* Kṛṣṇa takes the last step for the

world order to help mankind. If Rāma is ignored, as is being done at present both in personal as well as political life, then Kṛṣṇa is of no help and our efforts only lead to corruption and nepotism making life miserable. Rāma's is a vertuous stand for the purity of life and Kṛṣṇa's a tactful move for its richness.

Showing Rāma's importance the mythology says—Śiva is the first who described Rāma in one hundred crore *Ślokas* and having equally distributed them between *Devas, Dānavas* and *Mānavas,* only one remained. Each of the three wanted to possess it. The *Śloka* was in *Anuṣṭup Chanda* of thirty-two letters, so Śiva gave ten letters to each of the three, keeping the remaining two for himself. They are *Rā* and *ma.*

According to an ancient *Śloka* when you utter *Rā* the mouth opens and the evil present within, is thrown out and when you say *Ma* the mouth is shut not to allow it to enter back. Let us look at it differently. The word *Rāma* has three letters—*ra, ā* and *ma* denoting the three gods of the creation *(Trimūrti),* on uttering *ra* the mouth opens to create a sound and *ā* gives continuity to the sound wave. To pronounce *ma* the mouth has to be closed and this breaks the continuity. Thus *rā* denotes dynamism and with *ma* the silence comes. Thus *Rāma* brings peace in life, the ultimate end of creation. The *Yogīs* achieve this by practising. *'Om' Rāma* is one that pervades our life to inspire us to struggle against dark forces for *Viśva-Śānti* (World-peace). Being the very personification of virtue Rāma has influenced the life of people, irrespective of race and religion, very deeply since the dawn of civilisation.

While the life of Kṛṣṇa is divine full of miracles, Rāma is human just as one amongst us with his shortcomings and weaknesses, who struggles but in no case succumbs before evil. On the contrary with his virtuous stand He destroys it for the happiness of others. This aspect of Rāma appeals to the masses who imitate Him in many ways. The name of most of the people of Indian origin either begins or ends with the word *Rāma.* The

number considerably increases when we include those whose names are words that refer to Rāma. People greet each other with *'Rāma-Rāma'*. Such exclamations as *'Hāya Rāma'*, *'Hare-Rāma'*,*'He-Rāma'*, *'Are-Rāma'* are used to express different feelings at different times. From birth till death during *Saṁskāra* such as birth or marriage it is believed that it is Rāma who is born or whose marriage is being celebrated. Even one refers for himself as Rāma when he says—*'Apane Rāma'*. During *Holī*, the festival of colours one sings—*"Holī Khelen Raghubīrā Avadh Men"*, as if not he but Rāma is playing *Holī*. When a task is accomplished with great difficulty then it is said to have been completed, *'Rāma Rāma Karake'*, *'Rāma-Rāma ho jānā'* is death and *'Rāmadhāma'* is paradise. A long story is *'Rāma-Kahāni'*. There are many such expressions associated with Rāma. Three of them *'Rāma-Rājya'* —*'Rāma Bāṇa'* and *'Rāma-Nāma'* have influenced our thinking deeply.

Rāma-Rājya is an ideal state. Throughout history this idea has been the aim of kings and statesmen. Even in the present century *Mahātmā* Gāndhī advocated *Rāma-Rājya* after independence but the misdeeds of our politicians have failed to materialize it even after half a century. Having ignored Rāma they have established *Rāvaṇa-Rājya* full of corruption in every sphere of our existence. *Rāma-Baṇa* is a sure cure of any ailment. It is something that solves a difficult problem by the grace of Rāma. *Rāma-Bāṇa* seems to be the need of the day to cure the ailing politics. *Rāma-Tāraka* is a *Mantra* but the name of Rāma itself is a miracle. According to *Rāmāyaṇa* when the name of Rāma was written on the stones then they floated to build a bridge which led to victory. This has an esoteric meaning. The stone sinks in water so does a man, in this *Bhava-sāgara* (world). But one who has a stamp of Rāma upon him successfully crosses the ocean of worldly affairs. Even if a part of the virtues for which Rāma Stands, makes a mark in our life then it is easier to rise above crimes and sins. Above all *Dharma* is nothing but

the purity of life, a consciousness unpolluted by evil.

When some one explains a point and the person fails to grasp it then it is said—'The whole *Rāmāyaṇa* is over and the question remains whose daughter is Sītā.' Leave aside a layman even the scholars are confused to answer such a question. For some Sītā is in the sky amidst the stars while others search her in the furrows of a field. For some she is the daughter of the Mother Earth, for others, of the *Veda.* Amongst her fathers they name not only Janaka and Sīradhwaja but Rāvaṇa and Daśaratha also. One has to discover an answer for himself. The description of Sītā by the Mogul Prince, Dārā Śikoha is unique. It gives the essence of *Rāmāyaṇa.* He said—"The soul dwells in the body yet the organs fail to comprehend it. Similarly Sītā is the absolute purity that remains unpolluted by the earthly clothes that she wears." Rāma is the embodiment of those virtues that uphold this purity. Sītā-Rāma together as such stand as the ideal for humanity. Deeply influenced by *Rāma-Kathā,* Akbara, the Great, minted *'Siā-Rāma'* gold coins in their honour.

Such was the influence of *Rāmāyaṇa* that during *Nava-Rātra Rāma-Līlā* was staged in cities through out the past. With the growth of cinema and now Television, it is ignored. Yet the story of Rāma is a popular theme in cinema. One such film was *'Rāma-Rājya',* the only film which Mahātmā Gāndhī saw. In this the part of Rāma was played by a muslim and that of Bharata, by a christian. The secular quality of *Rāma Kathā* is beyond all doubts. The T. V. Serial of *Rāmāyaṇa* was so popular that during the show the roads were empty and even trains stopped where there were T.V. sets on the platforms. The administration remained alert to see that there is no failure of electricity during that period. Once *Rāma-Līlā* was staged in Delhi. The stage was a few kilometres in length and the audience sat on a platform that moved on rails scene by scene. The man behind the show was a muslim. However *Daśaharā* is celebrated with great enthusiasm and Rāvaṇa is also burnt

but the staging of *Rāma-Līlā* is not so common as it was in the beginning of the century. Similarly there are some other activities which in my childhood were very common, such as writing *Rāma-nāma* on small pieces of paper and within flour balls feeding them to fishes or writing *Rāma-nāma* a million times or more to offer the same to the Deity on *Rāma-Navamī* day. Similarly the wearing of *Rāma-nāmī-Dupattā,* a *Cādara* on which *Rāma nāma* is printed, is in vogue. *Rāma Rakṣā Stotra* is unknown to modern children.

Scholars and pandits all over the World have done good study and research work on *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and Tulasī's *Rāma Carita Mānasa.* My humble effort is to point out the importance of Rāma as a link between Śiva and Kṛṣṇa that effects the quality of our culture. For this alone Rāma has been so popular amongst poets, dramatists and writers from the very beginning till this day. In the opening scene of "*Prasanna Rāghava*" an ancient book, introducing the drama the *Naṭī* asks—"Have all poets and writers gone mad that they are writing on Rāma?"—The *Naṭa* answers—"It is not the fault of writers but of all those virtues that have consolidated in Rāma." Maithilī Śaraṇa Gupta begins "*Sāketa*", a modern book, saying—Rāma! Your story itself is poetry. It is easily possible for some one to become a poet."

Kabīra the true representative of our culture talks of weaving *Cādara* saying—*'Jyon kī tyon dhari dīnī cadariā'*—it is left pure and clean. This *Cādara* or a piece of cloth is an essential part of our culture. At birth or at the time of death the body is covered by a cloth, clean and new. It is offered to gods during *Pūjā* and to *Pitaras,* in *Śrāddha.* During marriage the bride wears a new *Cādara* or shawl to denote the beginning of a new life. Greatmen in different fields of life and scholars are honoured by presenting shawls to them for their valuable contribution towards culture. *Cādara* is also spread over a *Mazāra* as a mark of respect. *Cādaras* are woven on a loom.

Kabīra's weaving loom discloses the part that Śiva, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa play in the formation of the culture represented by the cloth that is woven on it. The frame of the loom with its empty space represents the two states of Śiva. Though the cloth is prepared on it but it is not a part of the cloth. Threads are spread lengthwise on the loom. Their number determines the *Maryādā* or limit and the quality of the cotton, their *Ādarśa* or virtue. All the threads are separate and free. This *Tānā* or warp represents Rāma and *Bānā* or waft, Kṛṣṇa. The *Bānā* thread goes above or below the *Tānā* threads to weave a cloth with a desired pattern. It is this *Bānā* that makes the cloth useable but the quality and strength of the cloth depends on the *Tānā*. Therefore Rāma is so essential for a culture which is *Sanātana Dharma* in daily life.

Kabīra called himself 'the dog of Rāma'. Rāma generates this faith in people. Iqubāla the poet who sang—*'Sāre jahān se acchā Hindostān hamārā'*—Our Hind is better than the rest of the World, considered Rāma as *"Imām-e-Hind"*. Just for political gains we have ignored this aspect of our culture as a result of which intolerance and violence are on the increase. It is high time to pay attention to the existing state of affairs before it is too late. No one else can save us from this crisis except Rāma. At the end may the understanding of the two quotations, given below help us to make a move towards *Rāma-Rājya*.

About *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* justice Hidāyatullāha says—"The central theme of the epic however has remained the same—the upholding of *Dharma* which alone can save mankind from errors and extinction."

According to Dr. Benjamin Khān—"In Rāma goodness became incarnated against which evil and wickedness plotted for self destruction."

Let us invoke the blessings of One who is *Setupati* as well as *Laṅkeśa Darpāntaka.*

Śrī Rāma, Jai Rāma, Jai-Jai Rāma.



Temples of Lord Rāma in Tanjore District

—*Dr. K. Subramanian*

Tanjore is a granary of South India. It is situated on the banks of Kāverī. The district has many famous temples of Shaivaite and Vaishnavite discipline. Many kings of earlier Chola, Pandya and Chera kingdoms have contributed their might in building and maintaining temples. The structures and architectures of these temples are unique in nature made of granite with tall towers etc. Saints like Sambandhar, Appar, Manicka Vasagār, Sundarar, Twelve Ālwāras, Arunagirinathār and Rāmaliṅga Ādigal sang a number of hymns about the deities.

Everybody (especially people of North) knows only Rāmeśwar where Rāma worshipped Lord Śiva but there are many temples. Puranic history describes Rāma's visit to these places. He offered worship in them and other few are dedicated to Rāma alone. Therefore worship of Rāma is an age-old practice of this part of Tamil Nadu. So many temples have both Śiva and Viṣṇu in the same premises. Let us see some temples connected with Rāma in this article—

Patteeśwaram Śrī Patteeśwarār Temple—

Rāma after killing Rāvaṇa—a brahmin is afflicted with *Brahma Hatyā Doṣa.* So he installed a *Liṅga* at Rameshwar and worshipped and got released from His *Brahma Hatyā Doṣa.* But He had another *Doṣa Saya Hatyā.* To get rid of this He sank a well and performed *Abhiṣeka* to the Lord from this water and the *Doṣa* left Him. The *Liṅga—Rāma Liṅga* and the well *Koṭitīrtha* are there in this temple.

Vedāraṇyam Śrī Vedāraṇyeśwara Temple—

Like *Saya Hatyā* one other *Doṣa Vīra Hatyā* also followed

Rāma. Therefore He prayed Lord Gaṇapati of this temple, and his *Vīra Hatyā* left Him. Since then the Gaṇeśa is called *Vīra Hatyā* Gaṇeśa. There is also a *Rāma Liṅga* in this shrine.

Śrī Usathanam Śrī Mantrapurīśwara Temple—

The *Sthala Purāṇa* says that Rāma had received *Mantropadeśa* from Lord Śiva of this temple and the details about building bridge across the sea to reach Lanka. Since he asked the details, the place is called Usathanam—means enquire. There is a *Rāmaliṅga* in this shrine also.

Thirunangoor Śrī Sempon Temple—

The *Sthala Purāṇa* says that Lord Rāma after the war stayed for sometime in Truda Netra *Ṛṣi's Āśrama.* As per the *Ṛṣi's* instruction Rāma donated a golden cow to a brahmin who in turn constructed this temple with the gold. So the temple acquired the name sempon (Gold).

Thilathaipathi Śrī Mukteśwarār Temple—

In this place it is said Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa did *Tila Tarpaṇa* to Daśaratha and Jaṭāyu and hence the place is called Thilathaipathi.

Thirupullam boothagudi Śrī Valvil Rāma—

The history of this temple says that Rāma took some rest after performing the last rites to Jaṭāyu. Since He came to the temple after the separation of Sītā, there is only one consort—Bhūmi Devī alongwith the Lord in this temple. This place is also called after Jaṭāyu.

Ramanathicharam Śrī Rāmanatheśwara Temple—

When Rāma came to worship the Lord of this temple, it is said Nandi stopped Him. But the goddess intervened and gave *Darśana* to Rāma.

Kumbhkonam—Śrī Rāmaswamy Temple—

Lord Rāma adorned this temple with His family. He and His wife sitting in a single seat, Bharata holding an umbrella, Lakṣmaṇa with bow and arrow folding his hands Śatrughna swinging a fan and Hanumān with *Vīṇā* on his hand reading *Rāmāyaṇa* is a rare site to see in any temple. The beautiful

scene of coronation is depicted in this temple.

The *Mahā Maṇḍapa* has 62 ornamental pillars depicting entire *Rāmāyaṇa;* is a beautiful manner worth seeing.

There are few other temples exclusively for Rāma alone.

Punnainallur Kodaṇḍa Rāma Temple near Thanjour—

The idols of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Sītā and Hanumān are made of *Śālagrāma.*

Vaduveer Śrī Kodaṇḍa Rāma Temple—

This is near Tannargudi. The *Pañcaloka* idol of Rāma with other three are beautiful.

Thillai Vitagan Śrī Kodaṇḍa Rāma Temple—

This is near Muthupet. The idol of Rāma with His consort and brother alongwith Hanumān made of *Pañcaloka.* It is life like bearing close resemblance to some of the human features. The idols were found 200 years ago alongwith another idol of Lord Naṭarāja from field. A temple was constructed and prayers were offered since then.

There are few other temples also Kamban, the author of *Kamba Rāmāyaṇa* was born in Therilandur near Mayuram.

Saint Tyāgarāja, a devotee of Lord Rāma, who composed lots of *Kṛtis* on Him lived in Tiruvaiyar and his *Samādhi* is on the banks of Kāverī. Musicians throng this place during January every year to pay their homage and sing his *Kṛtis* during the five days music festival.

Periavachan Pillai, a Vaishnavite has composed *'Divya Prabanda Paśwara Rāmāyaṇa'* from the words of the hymns sung by twelve Ālwārs.

Thus Thanjavur district has historical evidences about Rāma's visit to this place and temples in His names. A visit to these temples is worth rewarding.



Puruṣottama Rāma: The Supreme of Humankind

—*Prativa Devi*

The two names dearer to the world are Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. The facts of Rāma's life are not unknown. The stories of *Rāmāyaṇa,* the great epic reflecting the pride of Indian culture is passed on by mothers to their children, teachers to their taughts and old to the younger generation. It runs in the veins of every Indian.

Rāma was born to Daśaratha, king of Ayodhya and Kausalyā when the sun was in Aries, Mars in Capricornus, Saturn in Libra, Moon and Jupiter in Cancer and Venus in Pisces. His early years were spent in the forest university, the *Gurukula* where he was imparted the various branches of knowledge—physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual. Before ruling Ayodhya, he had to go for fourteen years of exile which ended after a hard struggle and killing of Rāvaṇa—the devil-doer and king of demons.

Critics often compare *Rāmāyaṇa* with the Greek epics—*Illiad* and *Odyssey.* We cannot deny the fact that *Illiad* and *Odyssey* are two great masterpieces which stand out from the rest of literary milieu. But these can never bė equivalent to *Rāmāyaṇa* in its moral and ethical values. A news letter published by Government of Java on this great epic commented: *Rāmāyaṇa* is the ideal text for the common mass and the intellectual class as well. Its stories are simple yet elegant. This heroic epic though considered a religious text has great literary values as well.

The great poet-anchorite Vālmīki, when asked the great sage Nārada, "If on earth there is a perfect man who hath a steadfast

heart, dwelling outside the stress of passion, fear and anger, always calm, not overbound by the material ties nor too attached to desires, with strong self-control not swept away by sense-storms, neither too desponding nor too overjoyed but in duties firm the wisest one—a man of tranquillity."

Nārada said in reply: "Such a man having wisdom's plainest mark does exist healing the earthly pains with virtues full and he is the great king Rāma of Ayodhya."

In the context of Holy *Qurāna* it is said that *Allāha* has sent his divine messenger to every country and every corner of the world. The estimated figure of all the divine messengers revolves around ten million twenty four thousand. But twenty-eight of them are well-known to the Arabs which is inscribed in the *Qurāna.* Maulānā Tāhir Hussain in his *'Paigambara Āsam'* very clearly mentions that *'Qurāna Śarīfa'* and *'Bhagawad Gītā'* are the two sacred books of *Allāha* and Lord Rāma and Lord Kṛṣṇa were the inspired Prophets. The Ahmedias also consider Rāma and Kṛṣṇa as the foremost Prophets sent by *Allāha* for India.

Mohummud Iqubāl, the renowned Hindi poet in many of his celebrated verses has described Śrī Rāma as the supreme manifestation of justice and mercy; valiant in war and noble in peace. He goes on to say that India is proud to have Rāma in her womb. He is the perfect ideal for the whole mankind. None to withstand him in power and potent, being the sole authority of love and truth.

From Rahīma to Rasakhāna, Tāj Zaisī and Salabegh the flow of devotion reveals their stoic acceptance tinged with silent adoration for Śrī Rāma.

A similar example of acclamation and admiration can be sought in Maulānā Zaffar Ali Khān's *'Shairis'.* The powerful characters of Rāma, Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa have inspired him and he feels that a Hindu wife cannot have a fairer exempler than Sītā; neither can a Hindu prince be more just and kind than

Rāma nor a brother more dedicated than Lakṣmaṇa. They are the glaring examples to be followed. 'Rāma' the name itself is enlightenment.

In one instance, when a few Indonesians were asked why they celebrate *Rāma Navamī,* the birthday of Lord Rāma in such a delight, they answered to an utter surprise that they have changed their religion but not their forefathers. Indonesia being a muslim country, earns a lot of foreign exchange by showing *Rāmāyaṇa* to the whole world.

Rāma is the supreme reincarnation of all human values for which he is known as the *'Puruṣottama* Rāma' or the supreme of humankind. It is viewed by many Western-oriented scholars including Gāndhījī to keep Śrī Rāma as a myth or an impersonal entity. But when Gāndhījī recited the verse:

'Raghupati Rāghava Rājā Rāma
Patita-pāvana Sītā Rāma'

We get a clear picture of 'the Rāma' he referred to here. This 'Rāma' is no different from our great national hero. Moreover what Gāndhījī imagined as *'Rāma Rājya'* is not purely an utopian concept. It did exist in the reign of King Rāma—the epitome of Hindu *Dharma. Rāma Rājya* means *Dharma Rājya,* the kingdom where *Dharma* or righteousness rules. All men enjoyed liberty, equality and fraternity. No diseases, nor famine, fire and flood touched it. It was far from any pain and sufferings. Love and honesty prevailed. Each caste performed its duties faithfully and *Vedas* enjoined them. So as to say, there were no kings no subjects; no criminals no sentence. *Dharma* ruled over the citizens and protected them from evil. Everyone in the kingdom of Rāma was contented. Gāndhījī dreamt of such an India.



Rāma Retold

Cultural News

Shenzhen University, located in one of the most modern cities of China, recently played host to an international conference called to discuss an unlikely subject—*Rāmāyaṇa*. The participants, who included several Chinese scholars on the subject, deliberated on various aspects of the epic and its relevance in contemporary society during the three-day conference.

Beijing University's Prof. Jin Ding Han, who has translated Tulasīdāsa's *Rāmacaritamānasa* into Chinese in verse form, was eloquent in his optimism about the future of oriental literature. He argued that the next century might as well belong to the oriental cultures since they symbolised the sustainability that the contemporary society seemed to be fast running short of. In his view, the Indian epic embodied an ethics that could form the basis of a future world order. He said the earliest *Rāmāyaṇa* text had reached China as early as the third century.

Another Chinese scholar drew attention to a popular Chinese novel, *We Chen En,* whose main character appeared to have been modeled on Hanumān. Other participants included scholars from a number of Chinese Universities including those at Shanghai, Chunking and Guandung. The non-Chinese participants came from places as far apart as Holland, Japan, Thailand, South Africa, the United States and, of course India.

The conference was the thirteenth in a series of international *Rāmāyaṇa* conclaves organised by the India based *Viśva Sāhitya Saṁskṛti Saṁsthāna.* The previous conferences had been held in Canada, Nepal, Mauritius, Surinam, Belgium, Indonesia, Holland and Thailand. The next *Rāmāyaṇa* conference was proposed to be held at Houston in the United States.

—*The Hindustan Times,* New Delhi,



Rāma Rājya: An Ideal Concept of Indian Administration

—*Dr. V. N. Yajnik*

The Rule of Rāma has been quoted as a righteous model of administration and has been close to the heart of all Indian thinkers including the father of Indian Nation, Mahātmā Gāndhī. To every Indian wedded to ancient culture, philosophy, political thought and past glory, this has been a real concept and not a mere Utopia. In the literature available on Rāma, there is very little of the political thoughts and the mode of political administration. For these we have to fall back on the *Vedas*, as these antedate the Rāma period. The *Ṛgveda,* and *Atharvaveda*, the *Yajurveda*, *Manusmṛti, Śukranītisāra*, the *Rāmāyaṇas* (Vālmīki and *Rāmacarita Mānasa* of Tulasīdāsa) and the epic *Mahābhārata* contain a vast material on political philosophy, pattern of administration and an ideal monarchial institution. The full-fledged concept of republic was known to Indians where a monarch had a respectable niche of his own. The Indian king was not an autocrat. In ancient Indian political system, the regal power was circumscribed by his ministers and counsellors. The king was guided by the advice of the senior citizens and the scholars (spiritual sages) and he constantly sought the sagacious directions from his preceptor (the *Rājaguru*). The political policy of Śrī Rāma was based on the above vedic and Smritic injunctions. It was based on religion and moral values. It was oriented towards lofty thoughts and good deeds of public welfare where precepts were unhesitatingly translated into practice. It was based on righteous and good conduct. The modern concept of secularism has been alien to Indian thought

as religion has been assigned a pivotal role in one's personal actions and social interactions. It is not parochial or dogmatic or narrow in its ramifications. Religion has deep permeability in the Indian social fabric. It is a repository of all human virtues, hence irreligiousness is abhorrent to Indian mind. Religion has been the fountainhead of Indian culture and so it cannot be divorced from any Indian social concept.

Important role of Religion—

If the political life of the country has to be virtuous and pure, if self-aggrandisement has to be uprooted and corruption eliminated and if nepotism has to be removed, the Indian thought of installing religion with all its nascent merits and conjunctional noble human traits on its deserving high pedestal wall have to be firmly adhered to in all its implications and total application. Only religion can instil virtue in human conduct. Subservience to religion creates God-consciousness which breeds reverence towards moral-values and righteous behaviour. The creed of non-violence and truth, so ardently advocated by Mahātmā Gāndhī, can play its unabridged and full role in a religious atmosphere. Bereft of religion, the political leaders will soon be transformed into self-seekers who will give up the path of truth, social service and achievement of public good. As at present, muscle and money (mafia power and pelf) are to rule the roost in the prevailing secular (pseudo secular irreligious) conditions. Selfless renunciation, the spirit of sacrifice and true humanism can be cultivated only through religion which is of paramount importance not only for India but for the welfare of the whole world. Mahātmā Gāndhī and Vinobā Bhāve believed in assigning in politics an important role to religion. The west oriented secularism is eating into the vitals of Indian politics and is at the root of all the prevailing nefarious political conditions and socio-political chaos.

The social philosophy of Śrī Rāma—

Śrī Rāma wanted his subjects to be virtuous, religious-minded, God-fearing, truthful, of unimpeachable conduct and

of noble character. Rāma was an apostle of human virtues (*Maryādā Puruṣottama*) and he wanted his subjects to follow suit. He wanted his people to act according to religious edicts and to follow the path of virtue *Satya* (truth). His advice to *Niṣādarāja* was unequivocal when he said—"Follow religion by thought and deed. Rāma was convinced that social-welfare could only be achieved when people led a religious-life. The purity of life was believed to percolate downwards. If people in authority (the ministers, the high-ups and the king himself) were honest and pure, the people were bound to follow their example. It has been said, where in a meeting irreligious prevail over religious and untruth rules over truth, where vice has an upper hand on virtue and violence has a sway on non-violence, there is surely to be absolute lawlessness and the people in such a gathering are spiritually dead one's Rāma was of the firm opinion that religion is one's true friend who accompanies him after his death also. So a person should never act against the religious precepts and his conscience.

Rāma's sense of detachment from power made Him an ideal king. At the time of His banishment to forest, he, without a demur, accepted the Royal order. Rather He felt that He was free from the bondage of kingship. He gladly went into exile, nourishing all benevolent thoughts about Kaikeyī (His step mother) and Bharata (His succeeding step brother). After the coronation, when Sītā was sent to jungle Rāma led the life of a recluse in the midst of all regal splendour. In pursuit of high ideals of life and for the sustenance of glorious human values, Rāma chose an ascetic life. He remained unperturbed in the face of all trials and tribulations so naturally conjugated with the rigorous life pattern of a hermit. In his *Rāmacaritamānasa*, Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa has aptly described Him thus—

प्रसन्नतां या न गताभिषेकतस्तथा न मम्ले वनवासदुःखतः।

(He was neither elated by the news of his coronation nor was he depressed by his impending banishment to forest). He

was a well balanced and fully developed personality (*Sthita-prajña* of *Gītā*). This is a desirable quality of a Hindu king who was never a stickler to or grasper of power and who would of his own accord renounce his throne in favour of his successor and would move to a forest to perform penance (*Tapasyā*) and to seek God. Rāma as a king, never suffered from internal conflicts nor had he any mental reservations.

No expansionist policy—

Rāma never had a desire for the expansion of His kingdom nor did he want to annex any other king's territory. The coronations of Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa bear ample testimony to Rāma's virtuous conduct behoving an able Hindu king. This lack of lust for power is attributable to family traditions, ideal education, mode of good conduct, fully developed character and a cultural sense of renunciation (*Tyāga*) which is born out of penance (*Tapasyā*). Rāma was an emblem of all these majestic qualities behoving an ideal Hindu (Āryan) monarch.

Rāma's belief in doing good to others (Paramārtha)—

One has to be unselfish to do good to others. This has been the morning star of Indian culture. In *Agnipurāṇa* Rāma has spoken to Lakṣmaṇa thus—"The king should be pure from within and spotlessly clean in his exterior. He should be respectful to the Almighty, reverential to the gods and the preceptor (*Guru*). He should be polite and should always be introspective. How such a king could deviate from the righteous path of duty and devotion? The lust for power and money, selfishness, unprincipled opportunism and deceptive deviations could never germinate in the rule of Rāma where virtue had always an ascendancy.

Democratic king was Rāma—

The government was in spirit a republic where Vasiṣtha's advice was an order, where ministers' council was fully heeded and where public opinion was absolutely unsuppressed and completely free. Rāma was a popular king who was a beloved

benefactor of his subjects. His sole aim of life was to keep his people happy and contented and the worst curse for Him was to fail in this paramount duty of kingship. Subjects were free to express their opinion. Rāma did declare in a public assembly—"I speak to you not sheltering under any commanding authority or unjust order. Please listen to me, but do as you like, should I indulge in any loose talk, please check me without fear. This is the height of king's humbleness, politeness, simpleness and sublime behaviour. There was absolute freedom of thought and action in *Rāma Rājya.* Liberty, equality and fraternity had full play in his system of government which pursued an unobtrusive policy of full public welfare and people's service. It was a government pledged to the public good and it acted with full vigour for the public benefit. It was truly a people's government run for the people by a beloved king, *Rāma-Rājya* for all counts, was a true welfare state.



वक्तव्यश्चैव नृपतिर्धर्मेण सुसमाहितः॥
यथा भ्रातृषु वर्तेथास्तथा पौरेषु नित्यदा। परमो ह्येष धर्मस्ते तस्मात् कीर्तिरनुत्तमा॥
यत्तु पौरजने राजन् धर्मेण समवाप्नुयात्। अहं तु नानुशोचामि स्वशरीरं नरर्षभ॥
यथापवादं पौराणां तथैव रघुनन्दन। पतिर्हि देवता नार्याः पतिर्बन्धुः पतिर्गुरुः॥

"The following should be communicated to the king embedded in righteousness. Conduct you yourself always among the citizens, as you would do with your brothers, this is the highest conduct and that which leads to unrivelled fame. That (went) that they would attain acting righteously among the citizens (would be the highest form of conduct). O bull among men, I do not feel penitent for my body (exposed to dangers). Do bear yourself in a manner through which the ill-report among citizens is proved to be wrong. The husband is the deity, the kinsmen, the preceptor for the (wedded) woman."

(V. R)

The Glory of Śrī Rāma Avatāra and Śrī Rāma Nāma

—D. Shankar Narayan

A. Viṣṇu Liked Rāma Avatāra Most

Prostrations to the Lotus Feet of *Mahāpuruṣa* Śrī Rāma who abandoned a vast and prosperous Kingdom coveted even by the gods and went to the forest to redeem his father's promise as he was *Dharma* personified. The feet of the Lord pursued the fictitious deer to fulfil the desire of his consort Sītā.

त्यक्त्वा सुदुस्त्यज सुरेप्सित राज्यलक्ष्मीं धर्मिष्ठ आर्यवचसा यदगादरण्यम्।
मायामृगं दयितयेप्सितमन्वधावत् वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दं॥

Śrīmad Bhagavatam proclaims that in the age of *Kalī* God is to be worshipped as Kṛṣṇa and Rāma.

Mahāviṣṇu assumed various *Avatāras* as a Fish, Tortoise, Varāha, Man-lion etc., to eradicate *Adharma* on the ascent, to establish *Dharma* and to bless humanity. The gods posed a question to Viṣṇu, "Which *Avatāra* of yours did you like most?" Promptly came the reply *"Śrī Rāma Avatāra"*. From the personal point of view the Supreme Lord liked this *Avatāra* most and the reasons are not far to seek. The nearest comparison could be with Kṛṣṇa, the all perfect form identical with the Lord Himself. But the *Avatāra* in prison, the parents were in prison, Kṛṣṇa had to be transported to Gokul and exchanged with Māyādevī. The delight of childhood pranks had to be denied to own parents. Own uncle Kaṁsa had to be killed. In domestic life the lord had 16008 wives. As the greatest *Karma Yogī* the Lord never occupied the throne Himself but functioned as the King maker. Having established *Dharma* with various Līlās performed for the permanent benefit and uplift of humanity in

a total span of 125 years, Kṛṣṇa caused the destruction of his own *Yādava* race also through the curse of sages and Himself ascended to *Vaikunṭha* under the pretext of being the victim of an arrow from the hunter. In comparison, Śrī Rāma was born in a Palace, was with His parents for His childhood, was wedded to Sītā, the personification of chastity and observed one wife principle Himself. Śrī Rāma ruled the Kingdom for a span of eleven thousand years. For most of this period Sītā was united with Rāma. The one year separation when Rāvaṇa carried away Sītā was also part of a divine secret plan to involve Him in an act of personal offence against Rāma which could form the reason for Rāma to kill him. During this period original Sītā was with the fire deity and Māyā Sītā was taken away by Rāvaṇa.

In *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa,* after Lava and Kuśa were united with Rāma, Sītādevī preferred to enter mother Earth. Recounting to his mind the excellent qualities of Sītā, Lord Rāma requested mother Earth to return Sītā to Him. When the latter did not respond, Śrī Rāma took an arrow and aimed it at mother Earth. *Bhūmidevī* appeared with Sītā seated on her lap and returned her to Rāma again. Hence from the time of their wedding and for the whole period of the *Avatāra* except for the one year period mentioned earlier, the divine couple were together. What more could be a life of individual personal satisfaction for the Lord?

Śrī Rāma was *Rājādhirāja* whose main concern was welfare of the people. The special features of *Rāmarājya* were:

All the people, *Brāhmaṇas-Kṣatriyas-Vaiśyas-Śūdras* were happy and contented in the pursuit of their own *Dharmas* for the good of society as a whole. Complete honesty and *Dharma* formed the basis for all their actions. All were healthy, long lived and free from disease. No one was in want. Monsoon was on time and in the required quantums. Floods, Cyclones etc., were unknown. Thieves and robbers were non-existent. Wind was always blowing pleasant. Trees and vegetation blossomed with abundance of flowers, fruits and vegetables. The elderly people

never had to perform the funeral rites of the younger.

The pure glory of Rāma captivated the minds of all and repeating Rāma's name all the people got on together as if members of one family. As mentioned in the *Gītā* "Through performance of one's own duty/work as worship of the Lord from whom all beings emerged and by whom all this has been pervaded, man attains perfection".

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम्।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः।।

This could be seen is practise in Ayodhya ruled by the Lord Himself as Rāma.

Engaged in *Paropakāra* throughout and easily and directly accessible to all his subjects at any time to solve their problems, Mahā Viṣṇu enjoyed the supreme delight of a detached *Karma Yoga's* role in *Rāma Avatāra* for a long span of 11000 years as in no other incarnation.

To crown it all the Lord's final ascent to *Vaikuṇṭha* by entering the Sarayū river was a community affair. It was open to all to accompany Śrī Rāma and none in Ayodhya missed the golden opportunity. Even devotees from Kiṣkindhā and Sri Lanka came to Ayodhya to proceed to *Vaikuṇṭha.*

Anyone who established contact with Rāma even once as a devotee, friend or even enemy initially, having experienced the supreme peace, and satisfaction derived therefrom would never give it up for the rest of his life. Such was the case during the time of *Rāma Avatāra,* such is the case even today.

No wonder Viṣṇu awarded the highest rank to *Śrī Rāma Avatāra.*

This is not to reduce the importance of *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Avatāra.* Dearest Kṛṣṇa attracts the minds of all (*Karṣati*), immerses it in supreme bliss and blesses devotees in manifold ways. We should be able to take a view Rāma equals Kṛṣṇa (Rāma=Kṛṣṇa).

The *Ślokas* in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* on *Kṛṣṇa Avatāra* and in *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* on *Rāma Avatāra* are very similar

(Viṣṇu form with four hands holding conch, discus, mace and lotus wearing an yellow silk and with all ornaments). The lotus like face, with the eyes full of compassion and grace showering blessings on all has been highlighted in both.

While Kṛṣṇa is the most well known form of Viṣṇu (कृष्णस्तु भगवान् स्वयं), Śrī Rāma is the secret, confidential form (रहस्यमूर्ति), of the same Lord.

Full benefits accrue to devotees of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa only when they realize that they are identical.

B. Blessings Galore in Rāma Avatāra

The *Devas* who had prayed for the *Avatāra* felt happy at the advent. The long list of persons blessed includes parents Daśaratha/Kausalyā, sages, Vasiṣṭha, Viśwāmitra, Bharadwāja, Vālmīki, Śarabhaṅga, Sutīkṣṇa, Agastya, and many other *Tapaswīs* in the forest who showed Rāma the bones/skulls of sages killed by demons and piled up like a mountain the very sight of which would send shock waves into any onlooker's mind. Śrī Rāma pledged to destroy the demons and to protect the sages. Who else would have protected these hermits wedded to non-violence? It was as if Rāma's stay in forest had been organised for their sake.The Lord spent 10 years visiting the *Āśramas* of sages.

Ahalyā was redeemed from the curse and reunited with Gautama. King Janaka was blessed by accepting Sītā's hand and Paraśurāma could handover charge to Śrī Rāma and retire for penance. *Niṣāda* chief Guha, Jaṭāyu, Virādha, Kabandha, Śabarī, Hanumān, Sugrīva, Vāli, Aṅgada, a host of monkeys, Jāmbavān, Swayamprabhā, Vibhīṣaṇa, the Lord of ocean, spies Śuka and Śāraṇa, even Rāvaṇa himself and many others were all recipients of Rāma's grace. As mentioned earlier, the people of Ayodhya were fortunate to have a King like Rāma. Śrī Rāma who is *Ātmā Rāma* and the *Ātman* in all creation accepted to rule only for the sake of the people.

C. Glory of Rāma Nāma

The first reference on the glory or *Rāma Nāma* could be

to sage Vālmīki who tells Śrī Rāma "O Rāma, who can describe adequately the glory of Your *Nāma* which uplifted me to the highest position of a *Brahmarṣi*".

राम त्वन्नाममहिमा वर्ण्यते केन वा कथम्।
यत्प्रभावादहं राम ब्रह्मर्षित्वमवाप्तवान्॥

The sage then recounts to Śrī Rāma who had come to his *Aśrama* enroute to the forest how in the company of robbers he had degraded himself to their level and had ruined himself. Due to some good fortune he could meet 7 sages in the forest who made him aware that he alone would have to suffer the consequences of his sinful actions. After verifying with his family members he could confirm that this would be really so as none of them wanted to share the fruits of his misdeeds. Due to the great efficacy of the *Satsaṅga* he had with the sages even for a short while realisation dawned on him and when he surrendered himself to them seeking their protection, they initiated him into the *Rāma Mantra* in the reverse order as *'Marā'*.

With concentrated and one pointed repetition of the *Nāma* over a period of time, an anthill developed over him *(Valmīka)* and the sages came again, retrieved him and blessed him the name Vālmīki as he had emerged from a mould of earth/anthill. The glory of *Rāma Nāma* had thus lifted him from one descending to hell to the highest position of a *Brahmarṣi*—a status which Viśwāmitra attained only after 4000 years of severe penance (4 spells of 1000 years each in the last spell of which only he could control anger).

For any person taking refuge in God, irrespective of the earlier background (even if sinful), there is no looking back at all as mentioned in the *Gītā:*

"Even a man of bad deeds, if he turns a new leaf and starts worshipping me should be considered as a *Sādhu* for his right resolve" (Ch. 9).

"Even persons of sinful birth and women, *Vaiśyas, Śūdras* taking refuge in me attain the supreme goal of God-realisation" (Ch. 9).

As proclaimed loudly by Śrī Rāma at the time of Vibhīṣaṇa, *Śaraṇāgati,* if a person surrenders to the Lord even once and prays that he should be accepted as His Own, the Lord, in turn, guarantees him total protection from all immediately and takes him into His Fold.

सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते।
अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद्व्रतं मम॥

Rāma Nāma is derived from the *Aṣṭākṣara Mantra ('Ra'* from *"Om Namo Nārāyaṇāya")* and the *Pañcākṣarī ('Ma'* from *"Om Namaḥ Śivāya").* Hence Rāma establishes the identity of Viṣṇu and Śiva.

Just 3 times repetition of "Rāma" (Śrī Rāma Rāma Rāma) has potency equal to the Viṣṇu *Sahasranāma* as advised by Lord Śiva to Śrī Pārvatī. It is the same Lord Śiva who propagates the glory of *Rāma Nāma* most to the world and, by delivering *Rāma Nāma* into the ears of all persons giving up their bodies at Kashi (Banaras), confers on them the qualification for *Mokṣa* (Liberation).

'Ra' in *Rāma Nāma* stands for *'Rakṣati'*—protects the devotee from the ocean of *Saṁsāra.*

'Ā' stands for *'Ati Saukhyam*—Extreme happiness' given to the devotee.

'Ma' stands for the fulfilment of the desires of the devotees *(Manorathas)* or removal of dangers like *'Maraṇa'* (Death) affecting them.

The two lettered name Rāma is most supreme and is most worthy of *Japa* by one and all.

रकारेण निजं भक्तं भवाब्धेः परिरक्षति।
अकारेणातिसौख्यं हि स्वभक्तस्य करोति यत्॥
मनोरथान्मकारेण ददाति स्वजनस्य यत्।
अथवा निजभक्तस्य मरणादि मुहुर्मुहुः॥
निवारयति तत् शीघ्रं रामनाम वरं ततः।
अयमेव सदा जप्यो रामेति द्व्यक्षरं मनुः॥

With *'Ra'* the mouth opens and all sins get out, with *'Ma'* the lips close (Mouth gets shut) preventing their re-entry.

Easiest Way to Cross Saṁsāra Sāgara

Hanumān ready to cross the ocean to search for Sītā tells his colleagues "When *Rāma Nāma* can enable one to cross the ocean of *Saṁsāra* itself, with that Lord in my heart, the *Nāma* on my tongue, and with his ring (with *Rāma Nāma* Embossed) on my finger, what is this *Alpavāridhi* for me to cross".

Having crossed the ocean (100 *Yojanas*), Hanumān, not even the least tired, states "How many hundreds more you want me to cross—I am ready".

Rāma is the *Siddha Mantra* worshipped by Brahmā, *Yogīs* and *Munis*. It destroys poverty, sorrow, all diseases including the *Bhavaroga* (Transmigration). It is the one *Mantra* for crossing the ocean of *Saṁsāra*. Salutations to *Raghurāma Mantra* which removes the great fear of death.

ब्रह्मादि योगि मुनिपूजित सिद्ध मन्त्रम्।
दारिद्र्य दुःख भवरोग विनाश मन्त्रम्॥
संसार सागर समुत्तरणैक मन्त्रम्।
वन्दे महाभयहरं रघुराम मन्त्रम्॥

Nāma Japa should be done with the attitude "Mother, Father, Relations, Friends all is *Rāma Nāma"*.

माता पिता बन्धु सखा सबहि रामनाम

This article is offered at the Lotus feet of the Lord with an advice to the tongue:

"O Tongue, always do *Japa* of *Śrī Rāma Mantra,* the supreme guarantee for *'Janma Sāphalya"*.

जिह्वे श्रीराममन्त्रं जप जप सततं जन्मसाफल्यमन्त्रम्।



The Importance of Rāma-Nāma

—*Dr. M. Narasimhachary*

The name "*Rāma*" is quite unique. Its potency and sanctity are matters of personal experience. Great sages of our land enjoyed its sweetness and sang eloquently about it. Vālmīki, the *Ādikavi* of Sanskrit literature, who wrote the *Rāmāyaṇa,* according to ancient accounts, was a highway robber to start with. The seven great sages headed by Nārada were once waylaid by him and they took pity on him, saw his future emanation as a great saint-poet and gave him the name *"Rāma"* in the reverse fashion, i.e., *"Ma-Rā"*. Vālmīki (whose earlier name was Ratnākara) chanted the *Mantra* that way, and became a great saint. Later on, he was destined to compose the immortal Epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa,* at the behest of Brahmā the Creator-god. Now let us have a peep into the efficacy and potency of this wonderful name *"Rāma"* which keeps even now, large concourses of people *spellbound* when it is just chanted. Let us also at the outset keep in mind the fact that the name *"Rāma"* refers to the son of Daśaratha but not either to Paraśurāma or to Balarāma.

The name "*Rāma*" is sweet and is composed of sweet-sounding letters, *Rā* and *Ma*. The semi-vowel *"Rā"* and the labial *"ma"* make a sweet combination. Whenever Vālmīki uses the name "*Rāma*", he uses the epithets *"abhirāma"* (beautiful) and/or *"Madhura"* (sweet). How can his experience be otherwise? Infact one of the verses of the *RāmāRakṣā Stotra* reads as follows:

कूजन्तं रामरामेति मधुरं मधुराक्षरम्।
आरुह्य कविताशाखां वन्दे वाल्मीकिकोकिलम्॥

(I bow down to Vālmīki the cuckoo-bird, which, perched

on the branch of the tree of poesy, sings sweetly the sweet-lettered name 'Rāma').

Vālmīki refers to the sweetness of the *Rāma-Nāma* at several places in the *Rāmāyaṇa,* thus—

'रामेति मधुरां वाणीं 'विश्वामित्रोऽभ्यभाषत'

(*Bāla*. 22. 11).

(Viśvāmitra uttered the sweet word '*Rāma*').

ऋषयो रामरामेति मधुरं वाक्यमब्रुवन्।

(*Ibid.,* 74. 24)

(The sages uttered the sweet name *Rāma* repeatedly).

Now let us come to the definition of the term *"Rāma"*. It is derived from the verbal root "*Ramu*" (Ist conjugation, *Ātmanepadī* verb), meaning, 'one who delights oneself *(....Ramate iti Rāmaḥ).* In other words, Rāma is one who is always cheerful and blissful. Only the Supreme Being can be blissful and cheerful (Cf. the *Upaniṣad* '*Raso vai saḥ*').

The second derivation is "one who makes others also happy" *(Ramayati iti Rāmaḥ).*This again is in conformity with the *śruti*-text quoted above, which says—एष ह्येव आनंदायति (He indeed makes all happy).

The third derivation is, "He in whom all the sages delight" (*Ramante yoginaḥ* asmin).

Vālmīki himself gives the etymology of this word in the following verse—

रामोरमयतां श्रेष्ठ इतिहोवाच लक्ष्मणम्

(*Ayodhyā*. 53.1)

(Rāma, who is the foremost among those who delight others, spoke to Lakṣmaṇa in the following manner).

Saint Tyāgarāja, who was a great *Rāmabhakta*, explains the secret power of this name in one of his immortal songs thus—

"*śivamantramunaku ma-jīvamu; Mādhava-mantramunaku Rā-jīvamu*"

("*Ma*" is the very life of the *Pañcākṣarī Mantra,* dear to the

heart of Lord Śiva. "*Rā*" is the very life of the *Aṣṭākṣarī Mantra,* dear to Lord Mādhava (i.e., Viṣṇu). In other words, if we remove the letter '*Ma*' from the *Pañcākṣarī,* it becomes lifeless: it then reads thus—*Na-Śivāya* (meaning, there is no welfare). If we take away the letter '*Rā*' from the *Aṣṭākṣarī,* it also becomes lifeless, reading thus—*Om Namo Nā-Yanāya* (meaning, there is no way to go!). Seeing the potency of these two *Bījākṣaras* (seed-letters), the great sage Vasiṣṭha joined them thus '*Rā*'+'*Ma*', and gave it as the name to the first son of Daśaratha. So, according to Saint Tyāgarāja, Rāma contains within himself, the powers of both Lord Viṣṇu and Lord Śiva.

Kālidāsa, the Prince of Indian poets, explains in the *Raghuvaṁśa* (X. 67) that the name Rāma was given by Vasiṣṭha to the first boy of Daśaratha, being attracted by his wonderful charm and the name became the first and foremost auspicious symbol for the welfare of the entire universe!

राम इत्यभिरामेण वपुषा तस्य चोदितः।
नामधेयं गुरुश्चक्रे जगत्प्रथममङ्गलम्॥

Now we come thus to another dimension of the import of the word *"Rāma"*. It not only means one who is himself cheerful, and makes others also cheerful (by his wonderful sweet name) but also one who is extremely handsome.

Again, we have to go to Vālmīki, for first hand accounts of Rāma's personal charm. He says in the *Sundarakāṇḍa,* thus—

रामः कमलपत्राक्षः सर्वसत्त्वमनोहरः।

(Rāma, the lotus-eyed one, charms all the living beings by his handsome form). Sage Śatānanda, the chief priest of King Janaka, was struck with wonder and admiration when he saw Rāma for the first time:

रामसन्दर्शनादेव परं विस्मयमागतः।

(*Bāla*. 51, 2)

Whenever the word Rāma is used by Vālmīki, he invariably adds the epithet *'kamalapattrākṣaḥ'* or *'rājīvalocanaḥ'*, or a synonym of it.

See some of the phrases used by Vālmīki in relation to Rāma:

"Rāmo lokābhirāmo'yam" (Ayodhyā. 2.44) (This one, Rāma, is bewitching the world by his personal charisma).

चन्द्रकान्ताननं राममतीव प्रियदर्शनम्।
रूपौदार्यगुणैः पुंसां दृष्टिचित्तापहारिणम्॥

(*Ibid.*, 3.29)

(Rāma with a beautiful face like the Moon, is extremely handsome to look at. He steals the eyes and hearts of the onlookers through his wonderful form and qualities like magnanimity).

यश्च रामं न पश्येत्तु यं च रामो न पश्यति।
निन्दितः सर्वलोकेषु स्वात्माप्येनं विगर्हते॥

(*Ibid.*, 17.14)

(He who does not see Rāma, and he, whom Rāma does not see, become ridiculed in the eyes of the people. Even his own self taunts him).

In the famous verse wherein Lord Śiva informs Pārvatī that repeating the name thrice is equal to repeating it a thousand times, we have a clue to this calculation. This is the verse in question:

रामरामेति रामेति रमे रामे मनोरमे।
सहस्त्रनाम तत्तुल्यं रामनाम वरानने॥

According to the numerology called *"kaṭapayādi"*, each letter of the Sanskrit alphabet has a specific numerical value. '*Rā*' has the value of 2 and '*Ma*', the value of 5. So, saying once "Rāma" means saying it 2x5=10 times. So when we say the name thrice, it becomes 10x10x10=1000 fold in potency. Such is the mystery about the name *"Rāma"*.

That is why, the sage Vālmīki says towards the end of the Epic—

रामो रामो राम इति प्रजानामभवन्कथाः।
रामभूतं जगदभूद्रामे राज्यं प्रशासति॥

(*Yuddha.* 128.102)

(When Rāma ruled over the kingdom, people spoke about

the exploits of Rāma, saying, Rāma, Rāma, Rāma.)

Incidentally it may be noted that in this verse, Vālmīki used the word "Rāma" five times, making its power one hundred-thousand-fold:

The *Hanumannāṭaka,* a beautiful drama in Sanskrit, opens with an invocation to the name *Rāma* itself.

कल्याणानां निधानं कलिमलहरणं पावनं पावनानाम्
पाथेयं यन्मुमुक्षोः सपदि परपदप्रत्यये प्रस्थितस्य।
विश्रान्तिस्थानमेकं कविवरवचसां जीवनं सज्जनानाम्
बीजं धर्मद्रुमस्य प्रभवतु भवतां भूतये रामनाम॥

(The name *Rāma* is the abode of all welfare; it can destroy the sins of the *Kaliyuga.* It is the holy of the holiest; it is the food that one can take with him on his onward march to liberation. It is the sole resting place for the words of all great poets. It is the very life of the virtuous. It is the seed for the tree of *Dharma.* May such name bring in all good to you!)

Now, let this also be my humble prayer. May we repeat the sweet and wonderful name *Rāma* and derive all happiness here and in the hereafter!



नाधयो व्याधयश्चैव रामे राज्यं प्रशासति । पक्कसस्या वसुमती सर्वौषधिसमन्विता॥
न बालो म्रियते तत्र न युवा न च मध्यमः । धर्मेण शासितं सर्वं न च बाधा विधायते॥
दृश्यते न च कार्यार्थी रामे राज्यं प्रशासति। लक्ष्मणः प्राञ्जलिर्भूत्वा रामायैवं न्यवेदयत्॥

"During the reign of Śrī Rāma no one was offended by either physical or mental ailment. The earth abounded in all kinds of plants and fully ripe agricultural produce. Thus in His kingdom neither any child nor any young man nor any middle-aged person died. Everything was administered according to '*Dharma*' (moral law). No hindrance was ever put. While Śrī Rāma ruled over the kingdom no one was seen coming with any request with folded hands, Lakṣmaṇa communicated Him all this."

(V. R.)

Importance of Nāma Japam

—S. P. Veeraraghavan

Greatness of *Nāma Japam* is stressed in almost all *Purāṇas* and perhaps it is most impressed in the Epic *Rāmāyaṇa*. The author, Vālmīki, who was only a hunter, was initiated by Nārada into *Nāma Japam*. Since Vālmīki had no formal education and could not read, understand and follow up the works of the sages, he was advised to repeat the name of Rāma as many times as possible. There again, trouble shooted up. The nomadic hunter could not pronounce that word. So, Nārada pointed out to a tree and asked him what it was? He said that it was *'Marā'*. So the great sage asked him to repeat that name continuously which became 'Rāma', 'Rāma',..... He did penance repeating the name and a big ant-hill was formed around him. In course of time he got enlightenment and since he emerged from an ant-hill fully enlightened he came to be known as Vālmīki. This is only one of the most important episodes.

Even today it is believed that wherever the name of Rāma is repeated, you could find His devotee and servant Āñjaneya there.

यत्र यत्र रघुनाथकीर्तनं
तत्र तत्र कृतमस्तकाञ्जलिम्।
वाष्पवारिपरिपूर्णलोचनं
मारुतिं नमत राक्षसान्तकम्॥

So, if anyone wants to please the great Hanumān, one need not think of *Hanumān Cālīsā,* it is enough if one repeats the great name of Rāma. At this stage, anyone will be tempted to ask, "Why not repeat *Hanumān Cālīsā*?" The simple answer is that most people do not know it, but everyone can easily repeat the name of Rāma.

In *Mahābhārata,* the great *Pitāmaha* Bhīṣma advises Yudhiṣṭhira to repeat the thousand names of the Lord. This is highly significant because, this *Sahaśranāma Stotra* was said in the presence of the Lord Himself. After the *Phalaśruti* of the *Sahaśranāma Stotra,* Pārvatī is seen asking Īśwara of something.

पार्वत्युवाच

केनोपायेन लघुना विष्णोर्नामसहस्त्रकम्।
पठ्यते पण्डितैर्नित्यं श्रोतुमिच्छाम्यहं प्रभो॥

ईश्वर उवाच

राम रामेति रामेति रमे रामे मनोरमे।
सहस्त्रनामतत्तुल्यं रामनाम वरानने॥

So it is believed that the saying of the *Rāma Nāma* is equivalent to the saying of *Sahaśranāma*.

Now, let us consider a few cases who were saved from peril due to the uttering of the Lord's name. Ajāmila was redeemed from Hell and taken to Heaven because he said the name of Nārāyaṇa at the time of his death. When the invincible elephant King Gajendra was deserted by all the members of the herd and when his fighting with the crocodile for 100 years proved futile, he cried out the name of the Lord—*Ādimūlam* and in an instant the Lord appeared before him and redeemed him from his suffering and death. When Draupadī was dragged into the assembly and when her modesty was at stake she cried aloud—'Govinda'—and her modesty was saved by the continuous flowing of the cloth.

These are only a few instances of the greatness of the *Nāmajapa.* The point to be noted here is that the names used by these people are long and contain more than two syllables. But the Name Rāma has only two syllables and hence could be repeated fast. Śrī Rāmānuja Muni, the exponent of *Viśiṣṭādvaita* and one of the worshipped *Gurus* of Vaiṣnavism at one time tell his desciples that the single letter *Ra* will give the effect of Rāma. This being the greatness of *Rāmanāma* let

us have that word in our mouth always, while sitting, while walking, while running, while doing anything let the mouth be muttering 'Rāma', 'Rāma',.....and get peace not only for oneself but also for the Universe.

Śānti Śānti Śānti.



स्नुषा दशरथस्य त्वं रामस्य महिषी प्रिया। जनकस्य सुता राज्ञः स्वागतं ते पतिव्रते॥
आयान्ती चासि विज्ञाता मया धर्मसमाधिना। कारणं चैव सर्वं मे हृदयेनोपलक्षितम्॥
तव चैव महाभागे विदितं मम तत्त्वतः। सर्वं च विदितं मह्यं त्रैलोक्ये यद्धि वर्तते॥
अपापां वेद्मि सीते ते तपोलब्धेन चक्षुषा। विस्रब्धा भव वैदेहि साम्प्रतं मयि वर्तसे॥

"Vālmīki the foremost of the ascetics, spoke these sweet words to Sītā pained by sorrow, delighting her as if with his (powerful) affulgence. "You are the daughter-in-law of Daśaratha and the beloved queen of Rāma and also the daughter of the king Janaka. Welcome! to you, O one loyal to your husband! As you were stepping in (the hermitage), I had recognized you through concentration based on *Dharma* (religious observance), and to my mind was revealed the cause (of your banishment) entirely. O fortunate one, your purity is known to me. All that exist in the three worlds is known to me. Yes, indeed, with my inner eye acquired through penance. I have perceived that you are free from guilt. Be composed, O daughter of the lord Videha, you are now in my (charge)."

(V. R.)

दो०—सबु करि मागहिं एक फलु राम चरन रति होउ।
तिन्ह कें मन मंदिर बसहु सिय रघुनंदन दोउ॥१२९॥

"And who having done all this ask only one boon as their reward: "Let me have devotion to Śrī Rāma's feet!"—enthrone Yourself in the temple of their heart, both Śītā and the Delighter of *Raghus*."

—*Mānasa*

Rāma Ṭaṅka

—*Dr. Major M.K. Gupta*

These are not the coins, but they have got an important place in numismatic. *Rāma Ṭaṅkas* are the temple tokens with imaginary date written on the *Ṭaṅka*. Most probably they are in circulation since last 250 years. These are available in holy places. Pilgrims purchase them for worship and keep them in the cash box, home temple thinking in view that they are *"Śubha & Lābha"* for them.

Mostly they are made by Brass, Silver, Silver coated brass and rarely in gold. On one side of these *Rāmaṭaṅkas Rāmadarbāra* and other side different gods, goddesses and *Aṅka Yantra* are impressed. Here are few common and rare type of *Rāma Ṭaṅkas* are published.

(1) Metal Silver:

Obverse—Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā seated on throne. Hanumān holding umbrella *(Chatra)* with both hands on left.

Reverse—Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa standing facing front, holding arrow in left and bow in right hand. Legend incomplete Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa Janaka Jabal Hanumanak (*Rāma Lakṣmaṇa Jānakī Jaya Bolo Hanumānkī).*

(2) Metal Silver:

Obverse—Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa standing facing right, few letters not clear.

Reverse—Rāma and Sītā sitting in a *'Parṇakuṭī'*. Right hand of Rāma in blessing position. Sītā is sitting in front of Rāma with folded hands. Hanumān on right and Lakṣmaṇa on left standing with folded hands. Rāma Sītā written on top.

(3) Metal Silver:

Obverse— Rāma and Sītā seated on throne, with Lakṣmaṇa standing on left and holding umbrella above the seated figure and Hanumān standing on right with folded hands. *Nāgarī* legend below *Rāmasāb.*

Reverse— Hanumānjī flying in air to catch the sun as mentioned in *Hanumān Cālīsā "Bāla Samaya Ravi Bhakṣiliyo". Haman* instead of Hanumān is written on top.

(4) Metal Brass:

Obverse—Number one to nine written in such a way that total of each line is 15 from any direction.

Reverse— Rāma Darbāra. Rāma and Sītā seated on throne. Lakṣmaṇa standing on left and holding *Chatra,* Bharata & Śatrughna on right. Hanumān is below the throne with folded hands.

(5) Metal Brass:

Obverse— Rāma and Sītā facing front seated on throne under the umbrella. Lakṣmaṇa on left and Bharata and Śatrughna standing on right. Hanumān is seated below the throne with folded hands.

Reverse— Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa standing facing front holding arrow in left and bow in right hand. Legend incomplete. *Rāma Lakṣmaṇa Janaka Jabal Hanumanak.*

(6) Metal Silver:

Obverse— Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa standing facing front, Rāma holding arrow in right hand and Lakṣmaṇa holding bow in left hand. Incomplete legend *Rāma Lakṣmaṇa Janaka Jabal Hanumanak.* Imaginary date 1740 below the feet.

Reverse— *Rāma Darbāra.*

(7) Metal Brass:

Obverse—Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa standing facing front. Rāma is holding *Triśūla* in Rt. hand and Lakṣmaṇa holding *Triśūla* in Rt. and bow in left hand. Imaginary date 1740 with *Rāma Lakṣmaṇa Janaka Jabal Hanumanak* written around the *Ṭaṅka.*

Reverse—*Rāma Darbāra.*

(8) Metal Brass (Silver coated):

Obverse—*Rāma Darbāra, Rāma Rāma* written in *Nāgarī* on the both side of *Chatra.*

Reverse—Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa standing facing front. Rāma holding *Triśūla* in Rt. and bow in left hand. Lakṣmaṇa holding only bow in left hand. Incomplete legend Rāma *Lakṣmaṇa Janaka Jabal Hanumanak* with 1700 date.

(9) Metal Brass:

Obverse—God Śiva seated on lion skin, facing front *Triśūla* in left hand and *Ḍamarū* in right hand, other two hands on chest. Snake around the neck. Water (Gaṅgā) coming from the *Jaṭās, Śivāy Namaḥ* in *Devanāgarī* written on top.

Reverse: *Rāma Darbāra.*

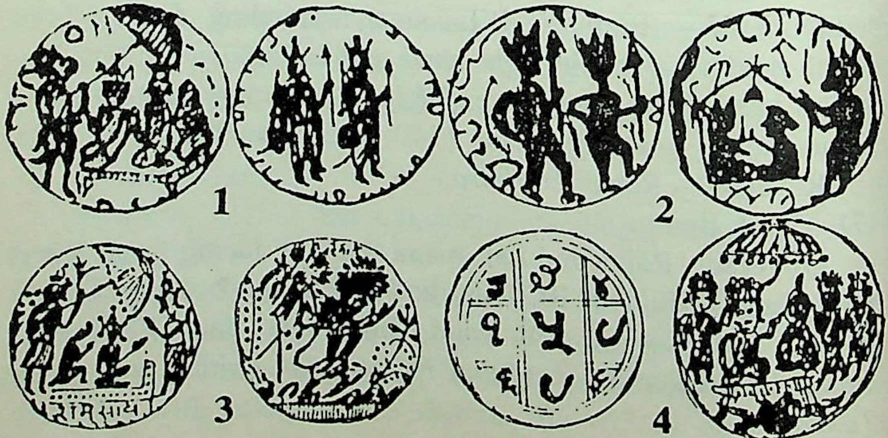
(10) Metal Brass (Silver coated)

Obverse—Jagannātha Subhadrā Balarāma standing facing front. Śrī Jagannātha Swāmī written below the *Ṭaṅka.*

Reverse—*Rāma Darbāra.*

Rāma Ṭaṇka Rāma Darbāra and Hanumān figure is from Ayodhya, with Śiva from Kashi and with Jagannātha Swāmī is from South India.

Rāma Ṭaṅkas






5




6




7




8




9




10

Obv. Rev. Obv. Rev.



न तु धर्मोपसंहारमधर्मफलसंहितम् । तदेव फलमन्वेति धर्मश्चाधर्मनाशनः ॥

"The fruit of virtue does not follow one who has reached the culmination of unrighteousness, even though he practises virtue; the fruit of unrighteousness alone follows him. And exceeding virtue (following an unrighteous act) atones for unrighteousness."

(V. R.)

Rāma the Ideal Man in Rāmāyaṇa

—Lt. Col. R. K. Langar

If there is any single character which dominates in *Rāmāyaṇa* it is the character of Rāma. He is very rightly called the ideal man in *Rāmāyaṇa.* He is an ideal son, an ideal husband, an ideal brother, an ideal friend and an ideal king who ruled his countrymen with love and affection. Rāma was also a great warrior, a saint who was totally committed to the duties to fulfil the different roles which a man inherits in his life. Though Rāma is described as an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu in the *Rāmāyaṇa.* He assumes human sufferings and sorrows to tell the mankind that sufferings and difficulties can be overcome by the human efforts. The *Avatāras* descend on earth not only to destroy the evil but also to teach the ordinary man by personal examples as to how human beings can raise themselves to a higher level of existence by following the right code of conduct. *Avatāras* show that there is no contradiction between the spiritual life and the life in the world. The character of Rāma in *Rāmāyaṇa* is a perfect example to illustrate this point.

Gāndhījī called *Rāmāyaṇa* as a love story which depicts love between father and son, between husband and wife, between two brothers, between friends and between ruler and the ruled. Once again Rāma plays a pivotol role in elucidating the various aspects of love which are depicted in *Rāmāyaṇa.* In fact all characters of *Rāmāyaṇa* owe their importance to Rāma. Rāma's own character is so perfect that any human being can be largely benefitted even if he follows a very small portion of the noble qualities displayed by Rāma. Rāma showed that it was humanly

possible to abide by *Dharma*. Rāma behaved like a normal being while facing worldly temptations, passions and emotions. Perhaps one of the best things which the character of Rāma has demonstrated to the people that by leading an ideal life one can attain and experience the divine qualities. For the ordinary human beings one great message which Rāma conveyed is that one should remain alike in pleasure and pain. Rāma did not display any happiness when his coronations was announced nor did he display any signs of sadness when he was told that he had to go to the forests for fourteen years. Rāma's love for his brother Lakṣmaṇa is beautifully exemplified when Lakṣmaṇa is seriously injured in his battle with Meghanāda and is lying on the death bed. Rāma expresses this love for his brother by saying that a wife like Sītā may be found but a brother like Lakṣmaṇa will be very difficult to find. Rāma's concern for the friendship is well illustrated when Rāma meets Sugrīva, the chief of monkeys and accepts him as his friend. Not only that Rāma takes a vow to kill Bāli the brother of Sugrīva who had robbed Sugrīva of all his belongings including his wife. Rāma says that a person is a great sinner who is not distressed to see the distress of a friend.

Rāma's regard for his parents is unparalleled. Rāma loved his father Daśaratha dearly. When Kaikeyī asked for two boons that Bharata should be installed as the king of Ayodhya in place of Rāma and Rāma be sent to woods for fourteen years. Rāma readily agreed to comply with the instructions. Rāma even told Kaikeyī that if she wanted the kingdom for Bharata it was not necessary to trouble the father. You had only to tell me and I would have declined to accept the throne. Again when Bharata meets Rāma in the forest and requests him to return to Ayodhya to assume kingship, Rāma tells Bharata that his father gave his life in order to keep his vow and so how could he violate his father's words by not completing fourteen years of stay in the woods. The younger generation of today must learn to obey

and respect their parents in the light of the attitude of Rāma towards his parents.

Not only the younger generation but also the grown ups must follow the example of Rāma and treat their aged parents with all the humbleness rather than becoming indifferent to them when they get old. Rāma was also a great obeyer. When Rāma was to leave for the exile the grief stricken Daśaratha tells Kaikeyī that it was his misfortune that his son obeys him every time. Contrast this with what the present day fathers say that it was their misfortune that their children never listen to them. Rāma was a great disciplinarian who had an extremely highly developed sense of duty. The character of Rāma is a source of great inspiration to our present day generation, both young and old.

Rāma was a most righteous person. Since he had promised his father that he would stay in the forests, he did not stay inside the kingdoms which he won during his battles to destroy the evil while in the forests. He won the kingdom of Kiṣkindhā and gave it to Sugrīva and similarly he gave Lanka to Vibhīṣana after winning it. Rāma's character explains and underscores that day to day conduct of a righteous person must be based on sound principles of life. Only such people can be regarded as religious in the true sense and not those who go to temples everyday in the morning and spend the entire day in doing what they feel like ignoring the concept of righteousness.

Rāma was a great preacher and always spoke the words that contained wisdom. Rāma tells Lakṣmaṇa that passion is the root of all sin and there can be no happiness if desires continue. Rāma says that there is no other form as good as the human body. It is the ladder that takes the man to the final beatitude. The elevation of the wicked is a source of calamity to the world on the other hand the advancement of a saint brings joy as the rising of sun and moon brings delight to the whole universe. Rāma also says that a vow of non-violence is the highest religious merit and there can be no sin as grievous as speaking ill of others. In the present day

society a substantial time of us is spent in the ill talks. We all must learn that whatever we speak conveys something positive. This not only elevates ourselves but also helps us to win the good will of others. Rāma was just king. As an ideal king his first concern was for his subjects. Rāma even sacrificed Sītā to carry out his duties as a king thus personifying that for a king national interests are higher than family interests. Rāma had never any doubt about Sītā's chastity. But since the people of Ayodhya had doubt about her chastity, Rāma had to desert Sītā. That is why it is said that it was not Rāma who abandoned Sītā, but it was the king who abandoned the queen to enable the king to perform his duties in righteous manner. Rāma's reign after his return from forest is popularly known as *Rāma-Rājya. Rāma-Rājya* does not necessarily mean a Hindu *Rāja* but it connotates how a king should rule his country by looking after the interests of each and every individual of the kingdom irrespective of caste, creed or sex. In *Rāma-Rājya* there were no evils in the society. Everyone loved the king not because he was just a king but because he was a trustworthy king who could attend to the problems of the citizens. Truth and purity reigned everywhere in the kingdom. In *Rāma-Rājya* everyone recognised the merits of others and everyone acknowledged the services and benefits received from others. In the present day context, the political party which rules the country must set good personal examples to inspire their people to work honestly. The government machinery of today must display complete transparency and complete fairness in their dealings to win the trust of the people which is very much on the decline in the present times. The evils of the society can only be removed if those who rule our country in the present times, are morally upright.

After studying the character of Rāma the idealness in a man, must grow. Respect for parents, love between husband and wife and between brothers must increase. The character of Rāma inspires all people of different age groups, young as well as old to stick to higher values of life. Rāma's character underscores the need to follow a moral code of conduct whatever be the social status of one's life.



Law in Rāma's Period.

—P. S. Varma

Since civilization took shape, in order to have peace in the society certain rules were framed which when universally adopted took the shape of laws as we know them today. These rules and laws were voluntarily followed, but selfishness came in the way and therefore breach of peace was punished. For such punishment, judges were appointed. The judges were guided by principles of Justice, Equity, and Good conscience. The guiding light behind these rules was protection of person, his honour and his property.

With minor changes, these rules remain untouched. They have stood the test of time and geographical limits. Theft is theft even in remote parts of the world, and whether it is committed in *Kaliyuga* or in *Satayuga.* Punishment part may differ from place to place and from time to time. It depended on frequency of the crime and moral standards of the society at particular point of time. If at one time for theft the punishment was chopping of the hand in some part of the world, it was mere warning in another part. Similarly, right to property has been changing. Previously, if a man owned a piece of land, he was entitled to the entire air column above it. But now the owner cannot claim absolute rights on his piece of land even, which can be aquired by the government in given circumstances.

In India, law is synonimous with *Vidhi. Vidhi* also means Brahmā the Creator. It also means *Vedas*—fountain head of all knowledge at all times and in all countries. If we go through the story of Rāma, it will be seen that on all major points, the

laws have remained the same as practised today.

Law of contract, law of adverse possession on rights of an exiled person, law of self defence, rights of an emissary etc; all remain the same more or less. As we proceed we shall see that the legal principles remain the same even today.

We all know the story of *Rāmāyaṇa.* King Daśaratha ruled the kingdom of Kaushal with Ayodhya as its capital. Kauśalyā was his first wife. No issue was born to her. Daśaratha then married Kaikeyī of Kaikaya. Before the marriage took place, Kaikeyī's father took a promise from Daśaratha that a son born to him from Kaikeyī would get the kingdom of Ayodhya (See *Garga Saṁhitā Rāmopākhyāna*). That way an international commitment was arrived at which was backed by the consideration.

Vālmīki tells us that once in a battle King Daśaratha was severely wounded and Kaikeyī had accompanied him in the battle, and she risking her own life had rescued Daśaratha. King being pleased promised to grant her any two wishes in consideration of the help she rendered to the King. Thus the promise was backed by consideration.

However, king got no issue even from this marriage, and he therefore married again. This time it was celebrated with Sumitrā. Even then there was no issue.

Then Daśaratha performed *Putreṣṭi Yajña,* and out of the *Yajña* fire a pot of *Khīra* was obtained which was distributed among the three queens. Now all the three queens gave birth to sons. We all know that Rāma was first born to Kauśalyā. Next came Bharata born to Kaikeyī. Sumintrā gave birth to twins—Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna. All the four sons of Daśaratha grew in a cordial and affectionate atmosphere and had great love and respect for each other.

On one occasion when Bharata and Śatrughna were out to Bharata's maternal father's place, Daśaratha apprehended that his end was near, So he consulted his preceptor Vasiṣṭha. It was decided that Rāma be. declared heir apparent. Atkin

translates the relevent Caupāīs of *Rāmacaritamānas* thus:

'Let there be no delay, but as ruler at once
Give the order and make preparations;
The council call quickly; the day Rāma's given
'The throne will bring high celebrations.'

(*Ayodhyā. Dohā* 5)

Then the king consulted the council of ministers. Tulasī writes:

If the council approves, let a day be appointed,
And joyously Rāma as king be appointed.

The council was very pleased to approve. Tulasī writes:

At this was Sumanta with fresh gladness inspired,
Like a well watered plant was the thing he desired
With hands humbly clasped thus he made his petition
'Long years may you live, Sir, in happy condition
A blessing to all in the plan you have made,
'Let it be done at once, my lord, not be delayed.'

Thus it will be seen that the King had not come to the decision all of a sudden. He had consulted his Preceptor and had consulted his council of ministers.

Daśaratha's family was well knit happy unit. All the three wives lived cordially. In particular Kaikeyī loved Rāma even more than his own son Bharata. When the news was revealed to her by her maid servant Mantharā, she happily said (writes Tulasī):

If tomorrow our Rāma as ruler is crowned,
Then whatever you ask, I'll give you wherever found.

But fate had other plans. Mantharā succeeded in changing the mood of Kaikeyī and persuaded her to upset the cart. She was reminded of the two promises of the King. She asked two boons when the King arrived:

1. Bharata be appointed heir apparent.
2. Rāma goes to jungles for a period of fourteen years.

Daśaratha declared in *Raghukula* one may lose one's life but not break his promise. Why *Raghukula* alone, in all civilized

societies keeping promise is not only honourable but legally binding also if the promise is backed by consideration. Here both the promises were backed by proper consideration. So they had to be honoured and they were honoured much to the agony of the King.

Rāma, went to the jungles. Bharata was called from Kaikaya. When he came to know what had happened, he was thoroughly annoyed. He rebuked his mother, and refused to accept the throne even though the legal opinion was in his favour.

Vasiṣṭha—

This is law, men and scriptures with one mind declare,
He is crowned when a father and king, names as heir.
Since the King to your hands did the kingdom entrust,
'Tis a father's command and obey you must.

Bharadwāja—

The world as well as the *Vedas* admit it and everyone says that of King's sons, he alone gets the throne on whom he bestows it. (Translation by Gītā Press)

Ministers—

'All the ministers said with respect, "What your teacher
Advises, you must do,
Then when Rāma returns, let such changes be made,
As may seem right to him and you.'

Kauśalyā—

Kauśalyā courageously added her word,
From your teacher good counsel, my son, you have heard.
For the good of all, humble obedience give.

But Bharata was of different opinion. He refused to accept the throne even temporarily during the absence of Rāma. He went to the jungles determined to crown Rāma as King even in jungles. Rāma was however not moved by the solicitations of all, but agreed to accept the throne after the expiry of the period of exile. Bharata then accepted his decision with a rider. He asked Rāma to give him his sandals which he would place on the throne and rule in Rāma's name. To this Rāma conceded.

Let us now examine the facts from the point of view of law as it stands today.

The law of adverse possession is more or less known to all. If a person trespasses on the property of another, and the rightful owner knowing such trespass takes no steps to regain possession, and twelve or more years pass the trespasser matures his possession into title, and no one including the rightful owner can dispossess him from the property. However if the rightful owner has some sort of possession—even symbolic—his rights as owner are not defeated.

In Ayodhya the position was that Daśaratha had after consultation with all who mattered had accepted Rāma as the heir-apparent. The law of the land was also in favour of Rāma. Suddenly due to the promise granted to Kaikeyī, he agreed to give the kingdom to Bharata. Kaikeyī, therefore, asked for another boon—viz., banishment of Rāma to jungles for a period of fourteen years. The idea was that if the people raised objection, the title of Bharata over the kingdom would mature by adverse possession. Bharata was conscious of the legal tangle. It was for this reason that when Rāma refused to return Ayodhya, Bharata insisted on taking sandals of Rāma to Ayodhya and place them on the throne. He said that he would rule in the name of Rāma. Tulasī writes:

> He (Bharata) worshipped the lord's sandals with a heart overflowing with affection and constantly referred to them in the disposal of the many affairs of the state. (Gita Press)

In this way Rāma, symbolic possession on the throne of Ayodhya continued, and any question of adverse possession could not arise.

Similarly, right of self defence was also part of the law of land. When Hanumān was caught in the gardens of Rāvaṇa, Rāvaṇa enquired why he had killed the *Rākṣasas*, he said that he killed only those who attacked him.

Rights of an emissary are reflected in the action of Rāvaṇa

when dealing with Hanumān and Aṅgada.

Punishment for adultery was death at that time. Bāli was elder brother of Sugrīva, and was ruler of the kingdom of Kiṣkindha. Due to a misunderstanding Bāli was presumed dead and the council of ministers enthroned Sugrīva. But Bāli was not dead. He came and thinking that Sugrīva had userped the throne by connivance, thrashed him, chased him out of kingdom and forfeited not only his property, but also his wife, and committed adultery on her. Rāma while searching Sītā arrived at Riṣyamūka hills where Sugrīva lived. A friendship was developd between them. Bāli was challenged to a fight. Rāma did not attack Bāli in the first instance, and gave Bāli to avoid the fight, but Bāli was hot headed, and so he was killed. When Bāli questioned Rāma of the propriety of attack on him, Rāma said that younger bother's wife, sister, son's wife and daughter were in the same category; and whoever committed adultery on them he could be killed. Rāma was the king of Ayodhya, and He ruled wherever He was present. It is different matter, that now the offence is not being considered as serious.

There are many more instances where the law in Rāma's time was in many ways similar to the law today, which shows that Law is universally accepted as parellel.



दिव्यो ह्यमूर्तः पुरुषः सबाह्याभ्यन्तरो ह्यजः।
अप्राणो ह्यमना: शुभ्रो ह्यक्षरात्परतः परः॥

"The *Puruṣa* is transcendental, since He is formless. And since He is coextensive with all that is external and internal and since He is birthless, therefore He is without vital force and without mind; He is pure and superior to the (other) superior imperishable (and *Māyā*)."

—*Muṇḍakopaniṣad* (II. 1.2)

Sītātyāga: Whether Kālidāsa Wrote It First

—*Gautam Patel*

Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki as popularly known, depicts the whole life of Rāma, the prince of Ayodhya, the life in which the annihilation of the demon Rāvaṇa, who carried away his wife Sītā, and Sītā's banishment *(Sītātyāga)* are the main instances. Rāma is regarded as an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu in later *Purāṇas* and literature. But scholars believe that the original *Rāmāyaṇa* was the story of the prince of Ayodhya and he was not invested with any divine power or origin. Hermann Jacobi has remarked: "In the genuine portions of the poem the gods interfere very little. Among them Viṣṇu and Śiva do not interfere, but Indra lends his chariot and armour to Rāma, Garuḍa destroys the magic Power of Indrajit's arrow and Agni testifies to the purity of Sītā, if portion really belongs to the original tale"!

The story in *Bālakāṇḍa* is very interesting. Daśaratha was performing sacrifice for progeny and gods, *Gandharvas, Siddhas*, great sages, etc., assembled to have their *Yajña-Bhāga*. The gathering complained to Brahmā.

भगवंस्त्वत्प्रसादेन रावणो नाम राक्षसः।
सर्वान् नो बाधते वीर्याच्छासितुं तं न शक्नुमः॥
त्वया तस्मै वरो दत्तः प्रीतेन भगवंस्तदा।
मानयन्तश्च तं नित्यं सर्वं तस्य क्षमामहे॥

(1.15.6-7)

After this they describe how Rāvaṇa troubles all the three worlds. The Sun cannot burn him, the Wind can't dare to touch him and looking to him the Ocean cannot even tremble.

Therefore, requested to find out some way for his annihilation, Brahmā explained how he bestowed a boon upon Rāvaṇa and declared that the demon king would be killed by a man. At this moment Viṣṇu appeared on the scene, was approached by gods for the benefit of the three worlds and asked to become the son of Daśaratha. Thus Viṣṇu was appointed by gods. *Mahābhārata* also says Brahmā had appointed Viṣṇu to accomplish this work.

The *Uttarakāṇḍa* of *Rāmāyaṇa* gives us the detailed story of the origin and exploits of Rāvaṇa. His divine origin or rather his connection with Brahmā, the creator of the Universe, his severe practice of penance and ultimately obtaining blessing of Brahmā etc., are given in every minute detail. Brahmā has come and Rāvaṇa asked for a boon—

सुपर्णनागयक्षाणां दैत्यदानवरक्षसाम्।
अवध्योऽहं प्रजाध्यक्ष देवतानां च शाश्वतम्॥
नहि चिन्ता ममान्येषु प्राणिष्वमरपूजित।
तृणभूता हि ते मन्ये प्राणिनो मानुषादयः॥

We find the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* in *Rāmopākhyāna* of the *Mahābhārata* (=MBh). The relation of *Rāmopākhyāna* (MBh. *Āraṇyakaparva* cr.ed. 256—276) and Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* was discussed by Jacobi, Winternitz, Hopkins and later Sukthankara. They adduced the evidence of a number of passages to show that the author of *Rāmopākhyāna* knew and was influenced by Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*.

On the other hand P.L. Vaidya discussed this problem in his introduction to the critical edition of *Yuddhakāṇḍa,* suggested that the *Rāmakathā* known to *Mahābhārata* is much older than Vālmīki's *Sītātyāga,* whether Kālidāsa wrote it first, and that "the *Rāmopākhyāna* is centuries older than the *Rāmāyaṇa*"!

Dr. U.P. Shah, the editor of the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of the critical edition of *Rāmāyaṇa* published by the Oriental Institute, Baroda, after a long discussion comes to the conclusion: "This does not

mean, of course, that the possibility of any other earlier *Ākhyāna* before the author of *Rāmopākhyāna* is denied by us, but it only means that *Rāmāyaṇa* precedes the *Rāmopākhyāna* and that the former seems to be the main source of the latter".

Dr. V. Rāghavan has examined critically Dr. P.L. Vaidya's view regarding the issue of the relative chronology of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Rāmopākhyāna*. He has refuted the arguments of P.L. Vaidya in great details by providing various textual evidences. Some scholars believe that "the controversy can now safely be set at rest in favour of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* being earlier and known to the author or authors of the *Mahābhārata*, specially of the *Rāmopākhyāna*.

And what I want to add here is that this *Rāmopākhyāna* has not mentioned *Sītātyāga*.

In *Rāmopākhyāna* we find that when Draupadī was carried away by Jayadratha and ultimately brought back by Bhīma and Arjuna. Yudhiṣṭhira, was disturbed too much. He asked a pointed question to the sage Mārkaṇḍeya—

अस्ति नूनं मया कश्चिदल्पभाग्यतरो नरः।
भवता दृष्टपूर्वो वा श्रुतपूर्वोऽपि वा भवेत्॥

"Have you ever seen or ever heard before of a person who would be more unfortunate than me?"

To provide enough consolation to the disturbed king Yudhiṣṭhira the sage Mārkaṇḍeya narrated the story of Rāma, the prince of Ayodhya, the most unfortunate person who like Yudhiṣṭhira not only lost his kingdom, but in addition his devoted and beloved wife Sītā was carried away by the valorous demon king Rāvaṇa. Here the narration lasts eighteen chapters, from chapter 258 to 275 of *Āraṇyakaparva*. This is nothing but an abridgment of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, which existed before *Mahābhārata*. But there are certain remarkable points in this abridgment.

It starts after a few verses narrating the origin of Rāvaṇa and his brothers Vaiśsravaṇa (Kubera), Kumbhakarṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa, Khara and his sister Śūrpaṇakhā. Kumbhakarṇa and Rāvaṇa

were the sons of Puṣpotkaṭā, Vibhīṣaṇa was the son of Mālinī and Khara and Śūrpaṇakhā were the son and daughter of Rākā respectively!

Kumbhakarṇa, Rāvaṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa practised severe penance for thousands of years. Rāvaṇa after one thousand years cut off his head and offered it as an oblation in the fire and the Master of the World Brahmā was pleased.

पूर्णेवर्षसहस्त्रे तु शिरश्छित्वा दशाननः।
जुहोत्यसौ दुराधर्षस्तेनातुष्यज्जगत्प्रभुः ॥

Ultimately Brahmā granted him a boon, as he desired, that he would never be defeated either by *Gandharva, Deva, Asura, Yakṣa, Rākṣasa, Sarpa, Kinnara* or animals. He had no fear from man because he himself was a *Puruṣādaka*—a man-eater. So he omitted man from the above list. Kumbhakarṇa asked for a prolonged sleep and Vibhīṣaṇa opted for a pious intelligence even in the midst of greatest miseries and a *Brahmāstra*.

After obtaining blessings from Brahmā, Rāvaṇa attacked Lanka, defeated Kubera and snatched away his *Puṣpaka Vimāna*. He, by his matchless physical strength and the blessing of Brahmā, started troubling all the three worlds. He made all people cry; hence he was called Rāvaṇa—

रावयामास लोकान्यत्तस्माद्रावण उच्यते।

Then *Brahmarṣis, Devas, Siddhas,* Kings etc., went to Brahmā under the leadership of Agni. They all asked for protection, and Brahmā said Lord Viṣṇu was about to come to the earth (*Ibid.* 260. 4-5). He advised also all the gods to incarnate themselves on the earth in the form of bear or monkey. *Mahābhārata* adds that there was a *Gandharva* maiden named Dundubhi who was asked by Brahmā to descend on the earth as Mantharā to accomplish the work of gods (*Ibid.* 260.9-10).

If we try to evaluate critically we find one or two very remarkable points here. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki the story of the birth and exploits of Rāvaṇa are not the part of 'Original *Rāmāyaṇa*' as modern scholars think. The original *Rāmāyaṇa*

as it was written by Vālmīki was the portion from *Ayodhyā-Kāṇḍa* to *Laṅkā-Kāṇḍa*, giving us the historical details about the exploits of the prince of Ayodhya i.e., Rāma. Here, in all these *Kāṇḍas* from *Ayodhya-Kāṇḍa* to *Laṅkā-Kāṇḍa* Rāma is represented as a pure valorous human being. He is never referred to as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu's descent on earth as Rāma, with other gods as monkeys, etc., is a story of *Bālakāṇḍa* and the exploits of Rāvaṇa, are part of *Uttarakāṇḍa*. Both these are mentioned in the *Rāmopākhyāna* of *Mahābhārata* as we have seen above. So this proves beyond doubt that before the writer of *Rāmopākhyāna* the *Bālakāṇḍa* as well as the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of *Rāmāyaṇa* existed. Besides, there are certain other references in *Rāmopākhyāna* of the *Mahābhārata* like the curse of Nalakūbera to Rāvaṇa that he would by force never be able to enjoy a woman who had no love for him (*Ibid*-264.58-59) proves that the *Uttarakāṇḍa* was known in all its minor details to the writer of *Rāmopākhyāna*. Yet to our great surprise we find that *Sītātyāga* was completely unknown to one who tried to abridge *Rāmāyaṇa* in the *Mahābhārata*. When he has mentioned so many details of the story there was no preventive reason for him to omit the *Sītātyāga* incident of the later life of Rāma which is responsible for heightening the character of Rāma as a King. This instance of *Sītātyāga* has made, in fact, Rāma a 'king' amongst the kings and a Prince amongst the husbands! *Mahābhārata* does not mention it at all.

When we try to look into the Buddhist sources of *Rāmakathā* we find three places where it is mentioned:—(i) *Daśaratha-Jātaka* which is found in *Jātakatthavannana,* (ii) *Anāmaka-Jātakam,* (iii) *Daśaratha Kathānakam.*

According to Father C. Bulcke, *Daśaratha-Jātaka* is a Pāli translation of one Siṁhalī text. Hence it is written after Kālidāsa. The other two Buddhist sources also belong to a later period than that of Kālidāsa. *Anāmaka-Jātakam* does not mention any name like Rāma, Sītā etc., but its story coincides

with the story of *Rāmāyaṇa*. *Daśaratha-Kathānakam* is certainly written after Kālidāsa. Yet it is worth noting that none of these mentioned *Sītātyāga* directly.

In Jain sources we do find a story of Rāma i.e., in *Ādi-Purāṇa* of Jinasena (9th cent.) and *Uttarapurāṇa* of Suṇabhadra (897 A D). and *Paumacariya* (4th cent.). In *Paumacariya* the story of *Sītātyāga* is almost similar to the story found in the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of *Rāmāyaṇa*. But this work also belongs to an age later than Kālidāsa.

In the field of classical literature when we try to examine the sources anterior to Kālidāsa we find to our great surprise that the whole story of *Rāmāyaṇa* was known to writers of classical literature, but the story of *Sītātyāga* had not reached their ears. Bhāsa, the well-known and worthy predecessor of Kālidāsa, to whom Kālidāsa refers as *Prathita-Yaśas* in his *Mālavikāgnimitra,* tried to dramatize the whole story of *Rāmāyaṇa* in his two well-known plays. *Ābhiṣeka* and *Pratimā-Nāṭakam.* But here the story ends with the coronation ceremony of Rāma after returning from Lanka and annihilating Rāvaṇa alongwith his all supporters. But not a word is mentioned about Rāma's so-called great act of *Sītātyāga.*

In later classical literature, especially after Kālidāsa, Rāma's act of abandoning Sītā was well honoured. According to Bhavabhūti, Sītā's abandonment and the installation of a golden image of Sītā were the deeds par excellence to prove Rāma's *Lokottaratva,* his nature of super-humanbeing, far above the ordinary man, because, according to Bhavabhūtī, while banishing Sītā from the kingdom, Rāma was harder than a thunderbolt and, while installing her golden image in sacrifice, he was more tender than a delicate flower—

वज्रादपि कठोराणि मृदूनि कुसुमादपि।
लोकोत्तराणां चेतांसि को हि विज्ञातुमर्हति॥

The story of Rāma has travelled to China, Japan, Tibet, Mongolia, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Srilanka, Phillippines,

Brahmadeśa, and even in some of the African Countries. But they all belong to a period later than Kālidāsa.

Thus except in the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of *Rāmāyaṇa* which is regarded as an interpolation by many scholars we do not find the *Sītātyāga* episode. Kālidāsa wrote *Raghuvaṁśa* (=R.), but not to summarise the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki. For example the first chapter of R. is not based on the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The second one where *Dilīpa-Parīkṣā* is at the centre is not found in the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki. Same is the case with *Raghudigvijaya, Kautsya-Prasaṅga, Indumatī-Svayaṁvara, Aja-Vilāpa,* the description of the fight of Rāma etc. These all are the outcome of the originality of Kālidāsa.

On the other hand Kālidāsa has tried to heighten or rather immortalise the characters of Dilīpa, Raghu or Aja by adding some new episodes. For example, in the case of King Dilīpa, the whole incident of *Go-sevā* (cow-worship) is added, Raghu's valour is detailed out in his fight with Indra and in his *Digvijaya* he is portrayed as *Dharma-Vīra* and *Karma-Vīra.* While Raghu proved himself an unparalleled *Dāna-Vīra* in the Kautsa episode of the fifth chapter. In the case of Aja the approach of the writer has changed altogether. Aja is an ideal and devoted husband whose heart longs for his wife when she has passed away by a delicate accident. Such instances, which are not found in the *Rāmāyaṇa* bespeak of the great imaginative power of Kālidāsa.

Kālidāsa, no doubt, knew the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of *Rāmāyaṇa*. This could be proved from a verse where he says that Rāma heard the stories about the origin and exploits of Rāvaṇa from sages who came to greet him (R.14.18). But he has purposely omitted the whole story. Then he suddenly describes *Rāmarājya* and then he adds the whole instance of *Sītātyāga* where we find him at his best. Just as *Go-Sevā* is added to highlight the character of Dilīpa, Kautsa episode for Raghu, or *Indumatīsvayaṁvara* for Aja, similarly *Sītātyāga* is added by Kālidāsa to heighten the character of Rāma. Because the author

of the *Mahābhārata* knew *Bālakāṇḍa* as well as *Uttarakāṇḍa* of *Rāmāyaṇa* but does not mention *Sītātyāga,* Bhāsa also does not mention it. No Jain or Buddhist source earlier than Kālidāsa has any reference to *Sītātyāga.* It occurs for the first time in Kālidāsa. Kālidāsa, as we know, is a conscious writer. He has anticipated that the pathos which prevails in this new episode may tempt any reader to reject it. Hence he himself has suggested that this *Sītātyāga* is his new creation (Sarga) and readers or scholars should not reject it (R.14.42). "If you have hearts which can melt in pity, do not set aside this canto of mine."*



मोह निसाँ सबु सोवनिहारा । देखिअ सपन अनेक प्रकारा॥ १ ॥
एहिं जग जामिनि जागहिं जोगी । परमारथी प्रपंच बियोगी॥
जानिअ तबहिं जीव जग जागा । जब सब बिषय बिलास बिरागा॥ २ ॥
होइ बिबेकु मोह भ्रम भागा । तब रघुनाथ चरन अनुरागा॥
सखा परम परमारथु एहू । मन क्रम बचन राम पद नेहू॥ ३ ॥

"Everyone is slumbering in the night of delusion, and while asleep one sees dreams of various kinds. In this night of mundane existence it is Yogīs (mystics) alone who keep awake—Yogīs who are in quest of the highest truth and remain aloof from the world. A soul should be deemed as having awoke from the night of the world only when he develops an aversion for the enjoyments of the world of sense. It is only when right understanding comes that the error of delusion disappears and then alone one develops love for the feet of Śrī Rāma (the Lord of *Raghus*). O friend, the highest spiritual goal is this: to be devoted to the feet of Śrī Rāma in thought, word and deed."

—*Mānasa*

* It is not necessary to agree with the views expressed in the article written in a most scholarly way. Absence does not necessarily mean non-existence.

—*Editor*



Miraculous Effect of Rāma-Nāma

—Mahatma Gandhi

Due to the majesty of *Rāma-Nāma* stone-rocks started floating on the waters; on the strength of *Rāma-Nāma* the monkey army succeeded in subduing the mighty Rāvaṇa; depending on *Rāma-Nāma,* Hanumān lifted the mountain and Sītā could protect and maintain her faminine chastity even after living for several months in the palace of Rāvaṇa only due to the majesty of *Rāma-Nāma.* Bharata could hold his life for the long fourteen years because from his throat no sound other than *Rāma-Nāma* came out. This is why Tulasīdāsa has rightly asserted and prescribed to mutter *Rāma-Nāma* in order to wash away the filth of *Kaliyuga.*

It is my conviction that the pronunciation of *Rāma-Nāma* is of uncommon import. If somebody really feels that the God is ever present in his heart in that case I feel that muttering *Rāma-Nāma* is not necessary for Him. But I am not sure if there is any such person on the earth. On the contrary my experiences indicate that there is something very special, very uncommon in muttering *Rāma-Nāma* audibly. Why is it so or how is it so—it is quite unnecessary to know.

Courtesy—Kalyana



दो०—सोचिअ गृही जो मोह बस करइ करम पथ त्याग।
सोचिअ जती प्रपंच रत बिगत बिबेक बिराग॥ १७२॥

"Pitiable is the householder who out of ignorance forsakes the path of duty; and pitiable the recluse who is attached to the world and lacks discretion and dispassion."

—Mānasa

Rāma: Caste is no Bar

—Dr. P. P. Sharma

He who adores the Lord belongs to Him, is His very own, irrespective of his caste, social standing and other outward circumstances. The much revered sage Nārada was (in some *Kalpa*) the son of a maid-servant hired for such menial jobs as scrubbing and washing. Through his contact with the illuminated souls he developed a passionate desire for a glimpse of *Hari* and became a transformed person. Who could have ever imagined that a one-time notorious brigand Ratnākara would win the glory of being the first poet of *Saṁskṛta* and compose the immortal epic *Rāmāyaṇa* through his constant repetition, although flawed and faulty, (*Marā, Marā*) of the *Tretāyuga Avatāra's* name? The venerable Vyāsa, too, does not have any very impressive antecedents. A fisher woman had conceived him as a result of an amorous encounter on a secluded island. It is for this reason and for his dark colour that he bore the name "Kṛṣṇa Dwaipāyana." But what dizzy heights he scaled because of his dedication to the Divine! After he had completed the tremendous task of organizing the *Vedas,* of writing the various *Purāṇas,* the *Mahābhārata* and systematizing the *Brahmasūtras,* he still felt a terrible weariness and dissatisfaction within him and these could not be quelled until he had produced his *magnum opus*, viz., The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa.* If he is recognized as an unrivalled world-teacher it is, no doubt, by virtue of his total absorption in the Lord. These three luminaries in the spiritual firmament of India are classic examples of how high can rise men born under depressing

auspices if they have surrendered themselves to the Lord. As ages roll by, the names of great sovereigns and potentates fade away into the limbo of oblivion, whereas theirs, keep shining steadily and in undiminished splendour.

It would be irksome to keep gazing up at the sky and straining our neck for a long stretch of time. The common ground too is strewn over with a large number of *Bhaktas* who were not at all handicapped by their so called humble birth or mean extraction. The high and the low, the exalted and the debased are entirely arbitrary categories devised in an artificial system. Each organ in our physiognomy has a specific function and is, as such, as valuable and indispensable as any other. We can no more walk on our head than we can think with our feet. But the analogy should not be carried further. The place to each part in human organism is permanently assigned whereas there is plenty of scope for shuffling around in our social organization. A vertical movement both upwards and downwards, has always been possible. In spite of this clarification in respect of the much maligned caste-system, the fact, however, remains that traditional society in our country has two clearly distinct and identifiable segments based largely on birth—the upper and the lower castes. There is no gainsaying the fact that the latter have been discriminated against. One cannot hold the brief for maintaining this vicious hiererchy. Anyone not living in the land of lotus-eaters cannot but be aware of the fact that the whole structure today is turning topsy-turvy with a vengeance. Not for me at the moment to celebrate it or lament over it. What I would like to argue—and this is the thesis I am trying to work out in the present piece—is that in the realm of *Bhakti* (devotion) those who were considered low-down socially had no problem rubbing shoulders with their peers from the higher strata. A semblance of egalitarianism certainly did exist in the community of the devout. It would help put things in perspective if we take up a few cases without any historical sequence or chronological order, almost at random.

One of the *Ālvār* poets of the Tamil country born in a low family had given his heart and soul to Śrī Raṅganātha in whose rapturous praise he kept playing on his *Vīṇā* day in and day out. Since his entry into the holy precincts of the temple was strictly forbidden, all that he could do was to wake up very early in the morning and after clearing the pathway of thorns and pieces of rock for the comfort of the pilgrims, manage to get a glimpse of the deity from a distant point outside. And even this was not tolerated as a sanctimonious priest charged him with committing sacrilege. All the discomfitures and indignities to which he was subjected, however, failed to abate his fervour. What a pleasant surprise he got when one night a sage entered his dimly-lit hutment and told him that he was there to carry him over his shoulders to the Lord as per His instructions! All remonstrance on his part, that being an untouchable and unworthy of such an honour, proved unavailing. The other name by which Tirupanālvār is known is Munivāhana, that is, one who was carried by a *Muni* on his shoulders. This clearly illustrates how the Lord can spot out his genuine devotee in a large crowd of pretentious and ostentatious people for He sees the heart and not the facade or outer paraphernalia.

Escorted by Śrī Akrūra, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma enter the city of Mathura but whom do they choose to bestow their beatitude on? Not the illustrious members of the ruling clan nor the elite of the capital but a tailor and a gardner, neither of whom could boast of a high birth or lineage while plying their mundane trade they would keep repeating the Lord's name and meditate on His enchanting form. Such simple folks, the *Bhāgavatam* seems to suggest, are His own men. In the utter simplicity of his heart, Gāndhījī loved to call them *"Harijanas"*.

From the 13th to the 17th century the whole country was swept by a strong wave of *Bhakti* and it threw up a great many God-intoxicated men and women of humble origin. Their names and achievements can easily fill up voluminous chronicles. We

can quickly and very briefly glance only at a few of them as representatives of this class. What is noticeable here is that each of them followed his own vocation, good, bad or indifferent. Keeping the Lord firmly fixed in his mind and repeating His name, "तैलधारावत्", like the continuous flow of oil. Janābāī, born to *Śūdra* parents, was a maid-servant in Nāma Deva's household. While doing the domestic chores her thoughts never strayed away from Viṭṭhala (Pāṇḍuraṅga). The Lord too reciprocated in a generous measure. One night he quickly walked into her room to help her grind rice. However, feeling hot he stripped away his costly shawl and precious jewels and ornaments and covering himself with the patched quilt of Janā left the place. But for the Lord's miraculous intervention she would have been executed like a criminal on the charge of theft. Sāwata, while tending his garden, remembering Paṇḍuraṅga on one occasion fell into a trance, his hands outstretched and his heart over flowing with love. The Lord placing his hands on the devotees head gave him ineffable joy by clashing him in a tight embrace.

The untouchable Cokhāmelā settled down with his family at Pandharpura but was debarred from entering the temple. Being moved by his absolute devotion, the Lord himself led him into the inner sanctum. Great was the outcry against him and a serious threat of punishment should such an offence be ever repeated. But the Lord, as though to make up for the fault and folly of the priests, turned up at the consecration of Cokhās's little temple. But there too the angry priest, unwilling to believe that the Lord should partake of food in an untouchable's house, gave a resounding blow on his cheek and proceeded forthwith for a dip in the Candrabhāgā. But what a big surprise (or shock) was in store for him when on reaching the altar he found Pāṇḍuraṅga displaying a swollen cheek.

Kabīra declares that he never touched ink and paper but he knew what love is. While weaving cloth to earn his bread he was always revolving such thoughts as are expressed in

utterances like 'हरि मोर पिउ, मैं राम की बहुरिया.' He had a full realization of the tribulation that one has to undergo to be enraptured and enthralled by the Lord;

हँस हँस कन्त न पाइया, जिन पाया तिन रोय।
हाँसी खेले पिउ मिलैं तौ कौन दुहागिनि होय॥

No caste or calling is too low for the merciful Lord to shower his blessings on. Also it is not at all necessary that a person should go through the scriptures and perform *Karmakāṇḍa* with all pomp and circumstance. Dādu was a '*Dhuniā*', Sena was a barber and Sadana was a butcher who in his ignorance used "*Śālagrāma*" for weighing meat. Since they all adored the Lord they belonged to Him; they were His very own. Says the saint Raidāsa with disarming candour:

जाति भी ओछी, करम भी ओछा,
ओछा किसब हमारा।
नीचे से प्रभु ऊँच कियो है,
कह रैदास चमारा॥

The *Rāmāyaṇa* contains a galaxy of brilliant characters and although in the action of the narrative her role is insignificant and peripheral, the character of Śabarī has its own peculiar charm. An illiterate tribal woman, a sonless poor widow, without any tangible means of livelihood, she was shunned by the pious who resented her very shadow anywhere near the hermitage. Having heard from the sage Mātaṅga that Śrī Rāma would soon be coming from Citrakūṭa to this part of the forest she would keep waiting for his arrival with agonizing impatience each day. She was painfully aware of her limitations in terms of caste etc. This did not, however, prevent her from gathering the choicest fruits for the hospitality of her divine guest. She was running around like one possessed in her preparations when Lo and behold, a *Ṛṣi* freshly bathed in the pond gets polluted (or so he believes) when she bumps into him. In order to wash off his sin the *Ṛṣi* gets into the pond and soon after the whole body of water became

infected with worms and its colour turned bloody red. Now arrives Śrī Rāma with his entourage and of all persons he inquires about the hutment of Śabarī. On her turn Śabarī lost all consciousness and began dancing like mad in unbearable ecstasy. On regaining her normal self she treats Śrī Rāma to what has since then been called *"Śabarī Ke Bera"*. How to pick out the sweetest fruits, she has to taste them first herself:

फलानि च सुपक्वानि मूलानि मधुराणि च।
स्वयमास्वाद्य माधुर्यं परीक्ष्य परिभक्ष्य च॥
पश्यन्निवेदयामास राघवाभ्यां दृढव्रता।
फलान्यास्वाद्य काकुत्स्थस्तस्यै मुक्तिं परां ददौ॥

(Padma Purāṇa)

Her persecutors begged for her forgiveness when they saw with their own eyes that the water became clean and assumed its usual colour after Śabarī's bath in it. Tulasīdāsa clarifies the relationship between *Bhakta* and *Bhagavān* in Śrī Rāma's brief utterance: ''मानउँ एक भगति कर नाता''.

Today we are plagued by a strange confusion. On the one hand we take pride that we are committed to secularism and do not allow caste prejudices to influence our conduct, on the other hand political parties are organized on casteist fanaticism. The very air that we breathe seeks with mutual distrust, hatred and intolerance. Very rightly has Śrī Satya Sāī Bābā declared: "There is only one caste and that is humanity." Let us take a leaf from the lives of the medieval saints and learn that one's status is not determined by the factor of his birth in a certain family but by how far or near he is to the Lord.



Some Illustrious Rāma-Bhaktas

—J. R. Kamath

Ahalyā—

We have the story of Ahalyā, the devoted wife of Sage Gautama, who was ravished by Indra, filled with illicit desire, by entering into the *Āśrama* of the Sage in his absence. C. Rājagopālācārī in his book *Rāmāyaṇa* writes: "She was not deceived by impersonation, but vain of her beauty and proud that it had won her the love of the lord of the celestials, she lost her judgment and yielded to his desire".

"The sage turned to his erring wife and prescribed her a long penance. He said: 'Living on air, you shall stay here, unseen by anyone. After a long time, Daśaratha's son will pass this way. When He sets foot in this *Āśrama* you will be freed from the curse. Welcome Him as a guest. You will then recover your lost virtue and get back your own beauty'. The sage then left for Himalayas. This curse was lifted later when Rāma set foot in the *Āśrama* on His being taken there by Viśwāmitra. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa touched the feet of the sage's wife made pure by penance. She welcomed the divine princes with all customary rites of hospitality. A shower of flowers descended from the heavens as Ahalyā cleansed of sin shone like a goddess; simultaneously the Sage Gautama returned to the *Āśrama* and received his repentant and purified wife who took back to his affection" (*Rāmāyaṇa* by Rājagopālācārī p. 41). Kālidāsa says: *'kilbiṣacchidaṁ rāmapadarajasāmanugraha'* (10. 21)—'The dust raised by the feet of Rāma, which have the power of destroying the whole load of sin, fell on her, as if Rāma had blessed her and thus she got *Mokṣa'*.

Jaṭāyu—

"The *Bhaktas* worship Jaṭāyu as the best of the *Bhaktas*" says Rājagopālacārī in his *Rāmāyaṇa* (page 173). Jaṭāyu is a mere bird who gave a fight to Rāvaṇa, who was flying to Lanka with Sītā after kidnapping her. Seeing Sītā in the chariot, the bird Jaṭāyu intercepted Rāvaṇa and heroically fought, calling him a coward and thief. However Jaṭāyu was over-powered by the felon Rāvaṇa. Jaṭāyu thus lay on the ground crippled awaiting its final end. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa who reached there in the course of Their search for Sītā saw the bird lying crippled and helpless in a miserable state. On seeing Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa it narrated to Them all that happened and then rolled on the ground lamenting loudly and finally breathed its last breath saying: "I have clung to life for love of You, to tell You what I know. Now that I have done this, please bless me. Let me die". Rāma wailed and said "I am most unhappy, Lakṣmaṇa. Giving up kingdom, I have come to the forest. I have lost My Sītā. This Jaṭāyu who was a second father to us has laid down his life for My sake". When their father died in Ayodhya his obsequies were performed by Bharata and Śatrughna, as Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were away in the forest. Thus by performing the obsequies by deeming Jaṭāyu as a father as it were, they derived some consolation for not being by the side of their real father, Daśaratha and performing the last rites to him. What an honour Jaṭāyu has thus been accorded. Seeing the pitiable condition of Jaṭāyu, Sītā, the Mother of the Universe had herself graced and blessed Jaṭāyu, after the vulture had fallen down on the ground at the vile attack of Rāvaṇa. The vulture has thus been blessed both by Rāma and Sītā. What wonder then that *Bhaktas* should assign a high place to Jaṭāyu among the *Bhaktas*. A mere bird, loved both by the Father and Mother of the Universe at the same time.

Rāma says (in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*) thus:

सर्वत्र खलु दृश्यन्ते साधवो धर्मचारिणः।
शूराः शरण्याः सौमित्रे तिर्यग्योनिगतेष्वपि॥

(*Araṇya Kāṇḍa* 68. 24)

"Indeed pious and valiant souls practising virtue and worth approaching for protection are found everywhere—even in those belonging to the sub-human species, O Lakṣmaṇa."

Śabarī—

Śabarī was an old ascetic woman of a forest tribe, serving *Santa* Mātaṅga, in his *Āśrama.* When the *saint* passed away, she also wanted to die. But the *Santa* asked her that her time was not ripe and she should await the arrival of Rāma, an incarnation of Viṣṇu, for gaining liberation. She was thus watching for the arrival of Rāma. Her constant vigil made her a *Rāma Bhakta.* She was all the while collecting fruits for offering them to her devoted adored Lord, Rāma, for the saint had told her:

"The Supreme Spirit, who exists eternally has embodied Himself as Rāma, the son of Daśaratha, in order to destroy the *Rākṣasas* and protect the *Ṛṣis.* He will be coming to this place. You remain here till then, concentrating your mind on the Supreme Being. Just now that Great One is staying at Chitrakuta. Retain your body till He comes here and after that you can burn it in the fire of *Yoga* and attain His status".

Thus eversince she has been solely engaged in meditation on Rāma. When Rāma visited the *Āśrama,* she honoured him by offering *Arghya,* and other ceremonial honours and then said:

"O Lord, I am not capable of praising Thee with a hymn, as I am an ignorant and low-born woman. What am I to do? Bestow Thy Grace on me".

According to Vālmīki, Rāma replied saying, "I have been duly honoured by you, O lady of austere vows, depart happily at will". She then cast herself into the fire created by her *Yoga,* and rose to the heavens, like a blazing fire. Thus by deep meditation Śabarī, the illiterate tribes-woman attained that holy realm where those eminent *Ṛṣis* remain.

Hanumān—

We now proceed to one of the most important characters in the *Rāmāyaṇa*—the Hanumān. Hanumān holds a unique position among the deities worshipped by the Hindu devotees. Scholars meditate on him and attain great scholarship. Hanumān is a *Cirañjīvī* who will continue to the end of this *Kalpa* and afterwards become the next Brahmā, the creator among the Trinities.

Hanumān is a *Brahmacārī* (a celebate) all through his life. He is worshipped as an *Iṣṭa Devatā* by all those who aspire for a life of perfect purity, continence and self-control. According to Swāmī Cidānanda "Personalities of Hanumān and Divine Sītā give unto us the secret key to success in this life of purity. Ceaseless service and total dedication sum up this spiritual secret."

He is one of the foremost of the devotees of Rāma "born to save *Dharma*". He has utilized all the three paths, viz. *Jñāna, Bhakti* and *Yoga*—These three 'cultures of *Sādhanā'* the instrumental trio *(Kāraṇatrayam)* as his own to the fullest possibility and shone brightly. He is a *Karma Yogī* too. We hence call *Jñāna-Bhakti-Karma* as *'Hanumān Yoga.'*

Even at first sight, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa attracted him as though by a spiritual gravitation, as it were. He finds an aura of radiation around them. He asks:

जग कारन तारन भव भंजन धरनी भार।
की तुम अखिल भुवन पति लीन्ह मनुज अवतार॥

"Are You the prime cause of this world and the Lord of all the spheres, manifested in human form to bridge the ocean of mundane existence and to relieve the burden of the Earth." Kamban puts it in a pictorial manner:

"How even tigers and pards, he thought within himself, 'look on them with tenderness, even as they would on their own cubs! Peacocks and other birds fly in groups and shade the delicate bodies of these strangers from the hot rays of the sun with their great wings; clouds cool them with their little rain drops, marching over them as they walk on. The burning stones on their way

became soft and cool as honey-dripping flowers to their feet at every step. Even trees and plants worship them, bending down their heads when they came near. Are they *Dharma's* self? Are those beings gods indeed who wipe off the sorrows of living kind and give them salvation, burning away the inevitable fruits of their deeds? My very bones melt, the flood-gates of love are opened within my heart, and I see no limit or end to the affection that surges me towards them".(*Kamba Rāmāyaṇa* by V.V. Aiyar page 179).

Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa then disclosed their identity to him and they in turn requested him to give details about him.

Now Hanumān recognised his Lord and falling to the ground clasped Rāma's feet and prayed that he may be excused for not recognising his soul's master who is no other than the Lord Himself. He says: "Although my Lord I have many faults, let not the servant be cast into oblivion by the master. The *Jīva* (ego), O Lord, is deluded by Your *Māyā* and can be redeemed only by Your Grace. On top of it, I swear by the Hero of Raghu's line, I know neither adoration nor any other means (of pleasing You). A servant depends on the master and a child its mother and both remain free from anxiety; for a master needs must take care of his servant". So saying he clutched at Rāma's feet, overwhelmed with love. The Lord of Raghus soothed him and said: "You are twice dear to Me as Lakṣmaṇa. Everyone says that I look upon all with the same eye; but a devotee is particularly dear to Me because he too depends on none but Me" (*Rāmacaritamānasa,* Gorakhpur Edn.).

This statement of Śrī Rāma, is interpreted by Scholars, as to imply that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were one in each other. Rāma was Lakṣmaṇa and Lakṣmaṇa was Rāma. Hanumān therefore was dear to Rāma than Himself. Lakṣmaṇa served only Rāma, whereas Hanumān served them both and hence 'twice dear'. Hanumān would not allow the noble brothers to climb the mountain as he thought the hard mountain may hurt their delicate feet and therefore, he carried them on his shoulders.

This episode shows the nature of *Ananya Bhakti*. Such a *Bhakta* is the true *Bhakta*—a devotee servant—who took the Lord alone his master.

Bhaktas:

(A) **Tyāgarāja—**

Tyāgarāja is the foremost among the devotees of Śrī Rāma. His devotion is in the form of music that has an eternal appeal to all those music lovers of South India. To him 'Rāma', his object of worship is '*Nāda Brahman*' itself. Vālmīki describes Rāma as *'gandharvācca bhuvi śreṣtha'* (*Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa* 2.35). His *Bhakti* as poured out in his songs is in the form of an "*Akhaṇḍa Sambhāvanā* with the Lord".

The name Tyāgarāja, means the prince of renunciation—one who has given up worldly desires.

Tyāgarāja addresses the Supreme as Rāma. The kingdom of God acquired through devotion is the greatest of all treasures. *(Rāma Bhakti Sāmrājyamu)*. He brings Rāma before our eyes as he stoops forward with his waving hair to bend the bow of Śiva or when he aims an arrow at Mārīca to subdue his pride". Tyāgarāja says: "*giripai nelakonna ramuni guritappaka*" Unerringly have I seen Rāma installed on the hill. In his yearning for seeing the Divine his body was thrilled, tears of joy rolled down his cheeks and he dreamed his desire to see the Divine, unable to give adequate expression to it.

In a piece in *Rāga Pantuvirali,* the saint sings about the nature of *Rāma Bhakti*. He says:

"How great and grand is *Rāma Bhakti;* devotion to our beloved father, Rāma! It stops the wanderings of the mind and protects one as eyelids to the eye (involuntarily). Otherwise will Lakṣmī Devī come down on earth as Sītā to love Rāma? Will Lakṣmaṇa serve him? Will sharp-witted Bharata long to see him and get enraptured? Will Śabarī offer leavings to Him? Will Lord Śiva praise Him? Will the Lord bestow the everlasting high status on Swayamprabhā? Can a monkey cross an ocean?

Will a woman tie the Lord to a mortar? Will a defaulter like Tyāgarāja get increasing bliss?....". The *Bhakta* makes no distinction between *Avatāras.*

Tulasīdāsa—

Nārada, the celestial bard with his *Tambūrā* was born at Tiruvaiyyaru as Tyāgarāja, to sing the glories of the Lord incarnated as Śrī Rāmacandra.

If Nārada embodied as Tyāgarāja to sing the glories of Śrī Rāma, Vālmīki became re-born as Tulasīdāsa, to re-new the faith in Śrī Rāma and to sing His glories.

"Tulasīdāsa belonged to the Lord and the Lord reclaimed him because He is very fond of performing new *Līlās"*—so writes Bānkey Behari in Minstrels of God (Vol. I page 271.)

Tradition has it, that the moment he was ushered into the world, he uttered "Rāma". The child had the size of a five year boy and possessed all the thirty-two teeth. This unsual trait in the child was considered by his parents as an ill-omen and therefore they abandoned the child in the forest. It is believed that such a helpless child, of a divine nature, was taken care of by Goddess Pārvatī, the divine Consort of Lord Śiva. He was born as an incarnation of Sage Vālmīki to sing once again the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Hindi language at the dictation of Lord Śiva and under the tutelage of Śrī Hanumān.

At Brindavan, which he visited once he saw every temple being dedicated to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Being a devotee of the form of Śrī Rāma, Tulasīdāsa became anxious to see Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of Śrī Rāma. It seems he entered the temple of Lord Madan Mohan Kṛṣṇa and entreated the Lord to show him the form of Śrī Rāma.

का बरनौं छबि आज की भले बने हौ नाथ।
तुलसी मस्तक तब नवै धनुष बान लेव हाथ॥

"Lord Kṛṣṇa; very beautiful art Thou with Thy flute and peacock plume, the head of Tulasī would bend only when Thou hast instead the bow and arrow (symbols of Śrī Rāma)".

This condition was accepted by the Lord and He immediately appeared as Śrī Rāma as desired. The idol was transformed to Sītā Rāmajī. (vide Minstrels of God Vol. II *ibid* page 273).

There is another version about his birth and abandonment. It is said that the astrologers predicted that the new-born child was extremely unlucky and would bring ruin to the family. The mother hearing these whispers directed her maid to whisk away the new born child to the maid's in-laws care, at the dead of the night. The child was taken away. Strange to say, the mother died within three days and the foster mother when the child attained five years. His father who was asked to take back the child refused to do so. Thus the boy wandered as an orphan. Father also died when the boy attained the age of five years. However Providence did not leave him forlorn. One Nārāyaṇānanda, a *Santa* took pity on him and the boy grew under his care. He named the boy, Tulasīdāsa. After some time the boy was put under the tutelage of one Śeṣa Sanātana, a great scholar, who taught him Sanskrit, *Vedas, Upaniṣads* etc. The boy thus became proficient in all these. Śeṣa Sanātana having died, the boy Tulasīdāsa performed the last rites of the *Guru,* as a son would do for his father.

Tulasī thereafter went back to his birth place, where he was received with great honours, learned as he was in scriptures. They flocked to hear him expound the secrets of the scriptures. One of the frequent visitors offered him the hand of his daughter. Unwillingly Tulasī accepted the offer. He became so passionate with his wife that he found it difficult to live away from her. A child born to them died soon after birth. Once his wife who became home-sick went to her father's house. Tulasī who was not in the house at that time, when returned, found his wife absent. On enquiry he understood that she had gone to her father's house. That dead of night, Tulasī rushed to the place passionately seeking her company, swimmed across the river that was in spate and walked some distance to his beloved's

house. The wife who felt flattered by the devotion of her husband to her body, lovingly chided him saying that if only he had devoted himself to Rāma with a fraction of his love that he had shown for her body which is a mass of flesh and bundle of bones, he would have achieved salvation. This shocked him. Immediately without retreating back, he went out in search of Rāma. His wife's pleadings to stay back had no effect on him. The decision became final and his mission started. The passionate man in him died and the passionate devotee in him was born. He visited several places associated with the life of Rāma. The *Dāsa* (the servant of God) became holy and his work sacred as Tulasī. His most important work was *Rāmacaritamānasa,* writing of which was commenced on March 31, 1574 A.D. marking Rāma's birthday. It took him 2 years 7 months and 26 days to complete. It was written in common Avadhi. Use of vernacular language, embittered the priestly orthodox class. He prayed Hanumān to save him. Hanumān advised him to write a petition to Śrī Rāma to save him. Thus *Vinayapatrikā,* another important work of his, came into being. There he prayed to Rāma saying: "All that I, Tulasī, ask of You is to redeem me in the manner it is possible". The Lord, the All Merciful Rāma, saved him.

Tulasī died on the banks of Asī in 1623, at the age of 80. According to some scholars he lived up to 125 years. Scholars agree regarding his age of death. But there is no unanimity regarding the date of his birth.

Swāmī Yatīśwarānanda in his work, *Meditation and Spiritual Practice,* narrates certain incidents in the life of Tulasīdāsa which prove his extreme faith in Śrī Rāma.

Even during his life time, *Rāmacaritamānasa* attained great heights of popularity which evoked jealousy among others. It was with great difficulty that he saved it from destruction. Once the Lord Himself appeared and protected it from the hands of robbers. Later he kept a copy of it at one Seṭha Todermal's

house in Benares which was saved (*ibid* p. 286).

According to Mahātmā Gāndhī, 'Tulasīdāsa had nothing to do with the Rāma of history. Judged by historical tests his *Rāmāyaṇa* would be fit for scrap heap. As a spiritual experience his book is almost unrivalled atleast for me' (vide *Truth is God* by M.K. Gandhi compiled by R.K. Prabhu page 83).

Tulasīdāsa says that there is no difference between qualified divinity and the unqualified *Brahman.* That is what the sages and men of wisdom, the *Vedas* and *Purāṇas* declare. That which is attributeless and formless is imperceptible, The Unborn becomes qualified under the influence of the devotees, love. How can the Absolute become qualified? He answers: 'In the same way as water and the hail-stone are non-different in substance. Infatuation is out of question for Him whose very Name is like the sun to the darkness of error. Śrī Rāma who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss combined is like the sun, the night of ignorance cannot exist in Him, even in the smallest degree. He is the Lord whose very being is light, there is no dawn of understanding in His case. Joy and grief, knowledge and ignorance, egoism and pride—these are the characteristics of a *Jīva* (finite being). Śrī Rāma is the all-pervading *Brahma.* He is the Supreme Bliss personified, the highest Lord and the most ancient Being. The whole world knows it. Lord Rāma is the only giver, all others are beggars of varying degrees. Thuth is one and all the rest only zero.

Rāmadāsa—

Swāmī Rāmadāsa—the spiritual *Guru* of Śivājī—is considered as an *Avatāra* of Hanumān, because of his boyish pranks. He consented to marry under the pressure of his mother. But at the moment of the ceremony he sprang to his feet and fled in the forest. As *Saṁnyāsī* he visited various religious places and established various temples of Hanumān and *Maṭhas* for the study of his disciples. Śīvājī was one of his disciples. His famous work *Dāsabodha* holds great sway among the Marāṭhās. He sings:

(1) O Rāma take Thy lowly by the hand. Cut of my

consciousness of self and save me. Make me good who has no goodness. Do Thou Almighty One, take me across this ocean of worldly existence (to save me).

(2) O Rāma this is all I ask of Thee now. I ask that in my heart there may be the spirit of worship. This compassion Rāma must give me.[1]

And may He dwell in me as I repeat His Name.

(Stotramālā p. 53—54)

(3) O Rāma this is all I ask of Thee now.......Always remain alert and fill the world with the Name of God. Seek and dwell in the company of saints. Wherever you go make the place resound with the Name of God.

Sufis, Mystics and Yogis p. 26 cited in *Nāma-Japa* by Sister Vandanā (p. 299).

Ālwārs—

"Thirumalisai Ālwār exclaims: 'I have no other God except Rāma, the destroyer of Lanka of the *Asuras*. Do not deem as fit to be attained other gods, who being cruel have not the Godly nature though they have attained God state." (*Ālwārs of South India* by K. C. Varadācārī p. 36). To him God is not only He who has God-state but also possesses Godly nature of love. The path of surrender to Him alone is the path of liberation. It is through His grace, not by our works of intellect or by our charity, do we attain Him.

Kabīra—

Kabīra who describes himself as the child of Allāha and of Rāma was an unlettered man, and a weaver by profession. He was born of a Brahmin widow, who cast him away as soon as he was born, in order to hide the shame. A Mahommedan, Nīrū by name, and his wife Nīmā, who were passing by picked up the child and took it home. The child grew under their care and accepted their profession as weaver. Even at young age, the child showed leanings towards Hindu faith. Being a Mahommedan, he knew he would not be accepted as a disciple

by any Hindu saint. He had faith in Rāmānanda, a saint of great repute at that time accepted by both the Sūfīs as well as by the Brahmins. As there were no chances of his being accepted as a disciple by Rāmānanda, he contrived a device. He laid down on the foot-steps leading to the Ganges, where Swāmī Rāmānanda was accustomed to bath early in the morning. Rāmānanda, who came that way, unknowingly trampled upon the boy lying hidden on the foot-steps. The great master at once exclaimed in astonishment Rāma. Rāma—the name of the Incarnation which he worshipped, and then said: 'What a poor creature is it that I have trampled upon?' Kabīra the boy at once rose up and declared, 'I have received the *Mantra* of initiation from Swāmī Rāmānanda's lips and I have been admitted to discipleship'. Both Hindus and Mahommedans denounced him. In spite of the protests of orthodox Brahmins and Mahommedans both equally annoyed by this contempt of theological landmarks he persisted in his claim, thus exhibiting in action that very principle of religious synthesis which Rāmānanda had sought to establish in thought.

Hindu asked Rāmānanda, whether he had accepted Kabīra as his disciple. Kabīra was sent for and on being questioned, he narrated the event that took place at the *Ghāta* of Ganges, which Rāmānanda had forgotten. Rāmānanda at once remembered the event, and clasped Kabīra to his bosom. Since then Kabīra regularly attended his master's *Maṭha* and joined him in his disputations with the Pandits and Mullāhs.

We know nothing about the various disciplines through which he passed. He never adopted the life of the usual ascetic or retird from the world in order to devote himself to bodily mortifications and the exclusive pursuit of the contemplative life. He was a skilled musician and also a poet.



Prayer—

Śrī Rāma-Pañcakam

—Sri Vadiraja

प्रात: स्मरामि रघुनाथमुखारविन्दं
मन्दस्मितं मधुरभाषि विशालभालम्।
कर्णावलम्बिचलकुण्डलशोभिगण्डं
कर्णान्तदीर्घनयनं नयनाभिरामम्॥ १॥

"Early in the morning I remember the charming lotus-like face of Śrī Rāma, accompanied with bewitching smile, sweet words and having spacious big forehead. Both his temples are beautified by lovely ear-rings hanging from the ear lobes. His big eyes are almost touching the ears. Thus his facial appearance is extremely soothing to the eyes."

प्रातर्भजामि रघुनाथकरारविन्दं
रक्षोगणाय भयदं वरदं निजेभ्य:।
यद्राजसंसदि विभज्य महेशचापं
सीताकरग्रहणमङ्गलमाप सद्य:॥ २॥

"I, in the morning adore the lotus-like hands of Lord Śrī Rāma which are a source of terror to the ogres and the bestower of the boons to devotees, which broke the mighty bow of Lord Śiva before the gathering of kings and obtained the auspicious hands of Sītā immediately."

प्रातर्नमामि रघुनाथपदारविन्दं
वज्राङ्कुशादिशुभरेखि सुखावहं मे।
योगीन्द्रमानसमधुव्रतसेव्यमानं
शापापहं सपदि गौतमधर्मपत्न्या:॥ ३॥

"I, in the morning offer my salutations to the lotus-like feet of Lord Rāma which are marked by auspicious lines of *Vajra*, *Aṅkuśa* etc., and are bestower of ultimate bliss to me which

are always hovered upon by the bee like minds of *Yogīs*, remover of the curse inflicted upon wife of the sage Gautam."

प्रातर्वदामि वचसा रघुनाथनाम
वाग्दोषहारि सकलं शमलं निहन्ति।
यत्पार्वती स्वपतिना सह भोक्तुकामा
प्रीत्या सहस्रहरिनामसमं जजाप॥ ४॥

"I, in the morning mutter through tongue the name of Lord Rāma which is capable of removing any fault of speech and destroyes all sins; which was muttered like *Viṣṇusahasranāma* by the universal mother Pārvatī in order to enjoy alongwith her spouse Lord Śiva

प्रातः श्रये श्रुतिनुतां रघुनाथमूर्तिं
नीलाम्बुजोत्पलसितेतररत्ननीलाम् ।
आमुक्तमौक्तिकविशेषविभूषणाढ्यां
ध्येयां समस्तमुनिभिर्जनमुक्तिहेतुम्॥ ५॥

"I, in the morning take refuge to the embodied form of Lord Rāma adored by the *Vedas,* gracefully blue like blue-lotus and sapphire bedecked by pearl-necklace hanging from the neck, the only object of meditation to the *Munis* desirous of salvation."



वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दम्

ध्येयं सदा परिभवघ्नमभीष्टदोहं तीर्थास्पदं शिवविरिञ्चिनुतं शरण्यम्।
भृत्यार्तिहं प्रणतपाल भवाब्धिपोतं वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दम्॥
त्यक्त्वा सुदुस्त्यजसुरेप्सितराज्यलक्ष्मीं धर्मिष्ठ आर्यवचसा यदगादरण्यम्।
मायामृगं दयितयेप्सितमन्वधावद् वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दम्॥

"O the most exalted person, O the Protector of devotees, I bow to Your lotus feet which are worthy of being constantly meditated upon, put an end to all discomfiture, yield all desired boons, which are the focus of all sacred places, are extolled by Śiva and Brahmā, afford shelter to all and dispel the distress of devotees and which serve as a bark for crossing the ocean of mundane existence. O the most exalted and righteous Person, I bow to Thy lotus feet, which ran after the illusory deer sought after by Thy beloved one (Sītā). You resigned the royal fortune—which was coveted by the gods and was most difficult to forsake—merely at the word of your father and went away in exile to the forest.

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavata* XI. 5. 33-34)



Āditya Hṛdaya Stotram

(Recited by Rāma)

रश्मिमन्तं समुद्यन्तं देवासुरनमस्कृतम्।
पूजयस्व विवस्वन्तं भास्करं भुवनेश्वरम्॥

"Worship (you) the sun-god, the ruler of the worlds, who is crowned with rays, (nay) who appears at the horizon (everyday without fail), who is greeted by gods and demons (alike) and brings light (to the world)."

सर्वदेवात्मको ह्येष तेजस्वी रश्मिभावनः।
एष देवासुरगणाँल्लोकान् पाति गभस्तिभिः॥

"Indeed he is the embodiment of all gods and full of glory and creates and sustains the gods and the demons as well as their worlds by his rays."

एष ब्रह्मा च विष्णुश्च शिवः स्कन्दः प्रजापतिः।
महेन्द्रो धनदः कालो यमः सोमो ह्यपां पतिः॥

"Indeed he is the same as Brahmā (the Creator) as well as Viṣṇu (the Protector of the universe), Lord Śiva (the god of Destruction), Skanda (son of Lord Śiva), Prajāpati (the Lord of Creation), the mighty Indra (the ruler of gods), Kubera (the bestower of riches), Kāla (the Time-spirit), Yama (the god of retribution), Soma (the moon-god), Varuṇa (the ruler of the waters)."

पितरो वसवः साध्या अश्विनौ मरुतो मनुः।
वायुर्वह्निः प्रजाः प्राण ऋतुकर्ता प्रभाकरः॥

"The *Pitṛs* (manes), the (eight) Vasus, the (twelve) Sādhyas, the (two) Aświns (the physicians of gods), the (forty-nine) Maruts (wind-gods), Manu (the progenitor of the human race), Vāyu (the wind-god) and the god of fire. He constitutes (all) created beings, he is the life-breath (of the universe), the source of the seasons, the store-house of light."

आदित्यः सविता सूर्यः खगः पूषा गभस्तिमान्।
सुवर्णसदृशो भानुर्हिरण्यरेता दिवाकरः॥

"An offspring of Aditi, the progenitor (of all), the sun-god, the courser in the heavens, the nourisher (of all), the possessor of rays, the golden, the brilliant, the one whose energy constitutes the seed of the universe and the maker of day."

हरिदश्वः सहस्रार्चिः सप्तसप्तिर्मरीचिमान्।
तिमिरोन्मथनः शम्भुस्त्वष्टा मार्तण्डकोंऽशुमान्॥

"He has seven green horses (yoked to his chariot), is myriad-rayed, full of rays, the destroyer of darkness, the source of happiness, the mitigator of the suffering of his devotees, the infuser of life in the lifeless cosmic egg, all pervading."

हिरण्यगर्भः शिशिरस्तपनोऽहस्करो रविः।
अग्निगर्भोऽदितेः पुत्रः शङ्खः शिशिरनाशनः॥

"And the cause of the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe. He is blissful by nature, the ruler of all, the bringer of day . A son of Aditi, he bears the fire of dissolution in his womb, is bliss personified and all-enveloping (like space), the destroyer of cold."

व्योमनाथस्तमोभेदी ऋग्यजुःसामपारगः।
घनवृष्टिरपां मित्रो विन्ध्यवीथीप्लवंगमः॥

"The lord of the heavens, the disperser of darkness, a master of the three *Vedas* (*Ṛk, Sāma* and *Yajus*), the sender of thick showers and the friend (giver) of water. He courses swiftly along his own orbit."

आतपी मण्डली मृत्युः पिङ्गलः सर्वतापनः।
कविर्विश्वो महातेजा रक्तः सर्वभवोद्भवः॥

"Carries in him the resolve to evolve the universe and is adorned with a circle of rays. He is death (itself), tawny (of hue) and the destroyer of all. He is omniscient, all-formed, endowed with extraordinary brilliance, coppery, the source of all evolutes."

नक्षत्रग्रहताराणामधिपो विश्वभावनः।
तेजसामपि तेजस्वी द्वादशात्मन् नमोस्तु ते॥

"The controller of (all) lunar mansions, planets and stars, the creator of all, the resplendent among the splendid. O god appearing in twelve forms (in the shape of twelve months of the year), hail to you!"

नमः पूर्वाय गिरये पश्चिमायाद्रये नमः।
ज्योतिर्गणानां पतये दिनाधिपतये नमः॥

"Hail to (you in the form of) the eastern mountain and hail to the western mountain. Hail to the lord of hosts of luminaries, the lord of the day."

जयाय जयभद्राय हर्यश्वाय नमो नमः।
नमो नमः सहस्रांशो आदित्याय नमो नमः॥

"Hail to (you,) the giver of victory, hail to (you,) the joy born of victory! Hail to (you,) the god having green horses (yoked to your chariot). Hail, hail to you with thousands of rays! Hail, hail to you, son of Aditi!"

नम उग्राय वीराय सारंगाय नमो नमः।
नमः पद्मप्रबोधाय प्रचण्डाय नमोस्तु ते॥

"Hail to (you,) the subduer of the senses, the valiant one! Hail to you as denoted by the mystic syllable OM! Hail to (you,) the awakener of the lotus! Hail to you, the fierce one!"

ब्रह्मेशानाच्युतेशाय सूरायादित्य वर्चसे।
भास्वते सर्वभक्षाय रौद्राय वपुषे नमः॥

"Hail to (you,) the ruler of Brahmā, Lord Śiva and Lord Viṣṇu (the infallible)! Hail to (you,) the sun-god, the (spiritual) light indwelling the solar orb, the resplendent one, the devourer of all, appearing in the form of Rudra (who drives away ignorance)."

तमोघ्नाय हिमघ्नाय शत्रुघ्नायामितात्मने।
कृतघ्नघ्नाय देवाय ज्योतिषां पतये नमः॥

"Hail to (you,) the dispeller of darkness, the destroyer of cold, the exterminator of foes, the one whose extent is

immeasurable, the destroyer of the ungrateful, the god who are the ruler of (all) lights!"

तप्तचामीकराभाय हरये विश्वकर्मणे।
नमस्तमोऽभिनिघ्नाय रुचये लोकसाक्षिणे॥

"Hail to you, possessing the lustre of refined gold, the dispeller of ignorance, the architect of the universe, the uprooter of darkness, splendour incarnate, the onlooker of the world!"



चौ०—जे न मित्र दुख होहिं दुखारी। तिन्हहि बिलोकत पातक भारी॥
निज दुख गिरि सम रज करि जाना। मित्रक दुख रज मेरु समाना॥१॥
जिन्ह कें असि मति सहज न आई। ते सठ कत हठि करत मिताई॥

"One would incur great sin by the very sight of those who are not distressed to see the distress of a friend. A man should regard his own mountain-like troubles as of no more account than a mere grain of sand, while the troubles of a friend should appear to him like Mount Sumeru, though really they may be as trifling as a grain of sand. Those fools who are not of such a temperament presume in vain to make friends with anybody."

—*Mānasa*

मनोऽप्यहङ्कारविकार एव नो
न चापि बुद्धिः प्रकृतेर्विकारजा।
आत्मा चिदानन्दमयोऽविकारवा-
न्देहादिसङ्घाद्व्यतिरिक्त ईश्वरः॥

"Mind is not *Ātmā*. It is just a transformation or product of ego *(Ahamkāra)*. The intellect is also not *Ātmā*. It is an evolute of *Prakṛti*. The *Ātmā* is pure consciousness and bliss embodied, immutable and different from the jumble of bodily assemblage and the supercontroller of all."

—*(A.R. Sund.* 8. 12-13)

Śrī Rāma Dhyānam

(Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa)

यः पृथ्वीभरवारणाय दिविजैः संप्रार्थितश्चिन्मयः
संजातः पृथिवीतले रविकुले मायामनुष्योऽव्ययः।
निश्चक्रं हतराक्षसः पुनरगाद् ब्रह्मत्वमाद्यं स्थिरां
कीर्तिं पापहरां विधाय जगतां तं जानकीशं भजे॥ १॥

"I worship Lord Śrī Rāma the spouse of Sītā, consciousness embodied, who on the humble request of the gods to remove the burden of the earth, incarnated in human form in solar dynasty on the earth; who after wiping out the entire demon race and establishing his fame capable of removing all sins merged in his original absolute form."

विश्वोद्भवस्थितिलयादिषु हेतुमेकं
मायाश्रयं विगतमायमचिन्त्यमूर्तिम्।
आनन्दसान्द्रममलं निजबोधरूपं
सीतापतिं विदिततत्त्वमहं नमामि॥ २॥

"I salute Śrī Rāma, the consort of Sītā who is the only cause of creation, sustenance and destruction of the cosmos, who exercised His *Māyā* and at the same time who is beyond the ken of *Māyā* whose form and nature cannot be thought out, who is untainted bliss solidified who is known only by Himself and who is the very knowledge itself."



Prayer-Verses from Rāmacaritamānasa

यन्मायावशवर्त्ति विश्वमखिलं ब्रह्मादिदेवासुरा
यत्सत्त्वादमृषैव भाति सकलं रज्जौ यथाहेर्भ्रमः।
यत्पादप्लवमेकमेव हि भवाम्भोधेस्तितीर्षावतां
वन्देऽहं तमशेषकारणपरं रामाख्यमीशं हरिम्॥

"I adore Lord Hari, known by the name of Śrī Rāma, who is superior to and lies beyond all causes, whose *Māyā* (illusive power) holds sway over the entire universe including gods from Brahmā (the creator) downwards and demons, whose presence lends positive reality to the world of appearances—even as the false notion of a serpent is entertained with reference to a rope—and whose feet are the only bark for those who are eager to cross the ocean of mundane existence."

(Bāla-kāṇḍa)

नीलाम्बुजश्यामलकोमलाङ्गं सीतासमारोपितवामभागम्।
पाणौ महासायकचारुचापं नमामि रामं रघुवंशनाथम्॥

"I adore Śrī Rāma, the Lord of Raghu's race, whose limbs are as dark and soft as a blue lotus, who has Sītā occupying His left side and who holds in His hands a mighty arrow and a graceful bow."

(Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa)

सान्द्रानन्दपयोदसौभगतनुं पीताम्बरं सुन्दरं
पाणौ बाणशरासनं कटिलसत्तूणीरभारं वरं।
राजीवायतलोचनं धृतजटाजूटेन संशोभितं
सीतालक्ष्मणसंयुतं पथिगतं रामाभिरामं भजे॥

"I worship Śrī Rāma, the delighter of all, whose graceful form is an embodiment of bliss and is dark as a rainy cloud,

who is clad in charming yellow clothes and carries in His hands a bow and an arrow, who has a beautiful, shining and well-equipped quiver fastened to his waist and has a pair of large lotus eyes, who is adorned with a tuft of matted locks on His head and who is seen journeying with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa."

(Araṇya-kāṇḍa)

कुन्देन्दीवरसुन्दरावतिबलौ विज्ञानधामावुभौ
शोभाढ्यौ वरधन्विनौ श्रुतिनुतौ गोविप्रवृन्दप्रियौ।
मायामानुषरूपिणौ रघुवरौ सद्धर्मवर्मौ हितौ
सीतान्वेषणतत्परौ पथिगतौ भक्तिप्रदौ तौ हि नः॥

"Lovely as a jasmine and a blue lotus, of surpassing strength, repositories of wisdom, endowed with natural grace, excellent bowmen, hymned by the *Vedas* and lovers of the cow and the *Brāhmaṇas,* who appeared in the form of mortal man through their own *Māyā* (deluding potency) as the two noble scions of Raghu, the armours of true religion, friendly to all and journeying in quest for Sītā, may they both grant us Devotion."

(Kiṣkindhā-kāṇḍa)

नान्या स्पृहा रघुपते हृदयेऽस्मदीये
सत्यं वदामि च भवानखिलान्तरात्मा।
भक्तिं प्रयच्छ रघुपुङ्गव निर्भरां मे
कामादिदोषरहितं कुरु मानसं च॥

"There is no other craving in my heart, O Lord of the Raghus: I speak the truth and You are the Spirit indwelling the hearts of all. Grant me intense devotion to Your feet, O crest-jewel of Raghus, and free my mind from faults like concupiscence etc."

(Sundara-Kāṇḍa)

रामं कामारिसेव्यं भवभयहरणं कालमत्तेभसिंहं
योगीन्द्रं ज्ञानगम्यं गुणनिधिमजितं निर्गुणं निर्विकारम्।
मायातीतं सुरेशं खलवधनिरतं ब्रह्मवृन्दैकदेवं
वन्दे कन्दावदातं सरसिजनयनं देवमुर्वीशरूपम्॥

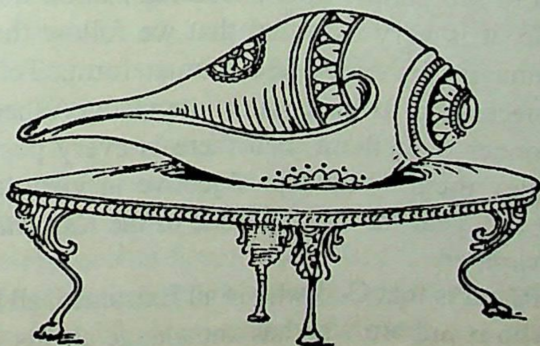
"I adore Śrī Rāma, the Supreme Deity, the object of worship even of Śiva (the Destroyer of cupid), the dispeller of the fear of rebirth, the lion to quell the mad elephant in the form of Death, the Master of *Yogīs,* attainable through immediate knowledge, the storehouse of good qualities, unconquerable, attributeless, immutable, beyond the realm of *Māyā,* the Lord of celestials, intent on killing the evil-doers, the only protector of the *Brāhmaṇas,* beautiful as a cloud laden with moisture, who has lotus-like eyes and appeared in the form of an earthly king."

(Lankā-kāṇḍa)

केकीकण्ठाभनीलं सुरवरविलसद्विप्रपादाब्जचिह्नं
शोभाढ्यं पीतवस्त्रं सरसिजनयनं सर्वदा सुप्रसन्नम्।
पाणौ नाराचचापं कपिनिकरयुतं बन्धुना सेव्यमानं
नौमीड्यं जानकीशं रघुवरमनिशं पुष्पकारूढरामम्॥

"I unceasingly extol Śrī Rāma, the praiseworthy lord of Sītā, the chief of Raghu's line, possessed of a form greenish blue as the neck of a peacock and adorned with a print of the *Brāhmaṇa's* lotus foot—which testifies to His being the greatest of all gods—rich in splendour, clad in yellow robes, lotus-eyed, ever-propitious, holding a bow and arrow in His hands, mounted on the aerial car named *Puṣpaka* accompanied by a host of monkeys and waited upon by His own brother (Lakṣmaṇa)."

(Uttara-kāṇḍa)



Editorial

First of all, I bow to all pervading God Rāma who out of mere compassion incarnated in the guise of a human being for guidance and redemption of the mankind.

Self-restraint, truthfulness, celibacy, honesty, integrity, good character, selfless spirit, selfless service to every being viewing Him as God itself and respect for elderly people—these are the pillars of Indian culture and *Sanātana Dharma*. In the present age all these ideal qualities are practically disappearing. Contrary to them thieving, robbery, dacoity, lying, duplicity, hypocrisy, fraudulence, gambling, violence, corruption, intimidation, dishonesty, sex indulgence, atrocities on women are increasing and rising to their climax. In students indiscipline and disrespect to the teachers has become the way of their life. People are suffering many mental agonies. They hanker after peace and peace eludes them. To check this deplorable degradation of mankind and to see people attain God-realization the only goal of human life, it is very essential that we follow the ideals set by Lord Rāma in his embodied human form. To follow his ideals it is necessary to have their knowledge. When we know them and ponder over them then there is every possibility that we may follow them. With this objective in view it is planned to bring out this year the special issue of the *Kalyana-Kalpataru* as *Rāma Number*.

Verily Rāma is that God who is all Existence, all Intelligence, all Bliss, who is unborn who has knowledge as his very essence and is a great reservoir of strength. He is all pervading and

encompasses the whole of the universe in one fraction of His being. He is indivisible and infinite. He is the Lord of all. Speech and senses cannot approach Him. He is impartial faultless, invincible. He is a mass of Bliss. He is beyond the reach of premordial matter, indweller of every heart, free from desire and attachment. Such great Lord Rāma out of divine grace embodies Himself as a human being merely for the well-being of the humanity and set ideals for the people to emulate and thus cross the ocean of transmigration.

According to *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* it is said that sage Vālmīki once had a conversation with sage Nārada about human perfectin. Vālmīki had enquired of Nārada if there was anyone in the world who could be an absolute ideal for humanity, who could be an abode of perfection as a husband, as a son, as a father, as a brother, as a ruler. In response Nārada had related to him a brief outline of the story of Rāma. Recalling that fascinating story sage Vālmīki developed the sudden inspiration to share it with the world in verses of sublime poetry—*Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* depicting before us the ideals of Rāma's life.

Indeed the highest inspiration of mankind,the greatest ideals that serve beacon lights in one's journey to the transcendental self are epitomised in the personality of Rāma. From the ancient past the glorious example of Rāma's life has surged like a sparkling stream through the hearts of millions of devotees. The very name Rāma is no longer a mere combination of letters nor the *Līlās* or the sportive actions of Rāma mere historical events. These divine sports of Rāma are embodying the eternal truths of a perfect divine life.

That very all pervading and infinite God has descended on this earth in the form of a human being known as Rāma. He manifests Himself in human form as an act of special grace with a view to affording people the rare opportunity of liberating themselves through His sight and touch as well as through direct exchange of words with Him also with a view of conferring

on His loving devotees the proud previlege of participation in and enjoyment of His divine sports. People can easily cross the ocean of transmigration through constant remembrance of His enchanting form revealed in such manifestation and through the hearing and chanting His Name, glory, virtues, exalted nature and meditation on His Form. This process of liberation of souls in bondage is set in motion by such manifestation.

Rāma awakened in the mind of people faith in and reverence for the *Vedas* and other scriptures, the other world, saints and God by carrying out the injunctions of the scriptures in His own personal life and setting an example of righteousness by the use of His inspiring and powerful words and message also his own conduct and developing among the people a natural love and reverence for virtues and right conduct and also makes them strongly cling to them.

To deal with all the important aspects of the life of Rāma we published a list of topics in our January issue. We received from our gracious readers many articles dealing with several such aspects but due to shortage of space and lack of articles we could not cover all the aspects as thought out. However we have made an attempt to include all the very important aspects of Rāma's life which inspire us to lead a life of integrity. I request all the readers to strive to be true examples of this life divine. By Such example we would be able to transform the members of our family, to transform our communities and eventually our nations and ultimately the world. The world is passing through a very troubled time; every nation is experiencing grave difficulties. But out of these difficulties must arise some souls who are interested not so much in speaking about honesty, character and spiritual truth as they are in exemplifying it in their lives. We feel some apology is needed for our bold attempt to present a verbal picture of Rāma in this *Rāma Number*, Rāma is beyond word. He can never be described in human language. In spite of this we have made this endeavour with a view that

whoever reads it will be spiritually benefitted.

At present honesty, integrity and character are the worst casuality. If the readers of this special issue get some inspiration from the life of Rāma, as a son, as a brother, as a husband, as a ruler and lead a pure honest and spiritual life. We would feel greatly encouraged in our endeavour.

We feel indebted to our gracious contributors who have taken a lot of pains to send us their contributions without any remuneration. Without their help it would not have been possible at all to bring out this issue. We have made attempt to accommodate as many articles as possible but we were compelled not to include certain articles due to lack of space and standard of the contribution also. We seek an apology from those contributors whose articles have not been included. This issue may contain several flaws from the literary point of view literary culture not being its aim. We hope our readers will forgive us for such flaws.

I would request that the kind readers will kindly extend their good-will and sympathies to me and overlook the numerous faults that may come to their notice and favour me with benevolent suggestions and advice so as to enable me to correct such faults in the next issue.

It may not be out of place to add a personal word that I am not worthy of the editorial duties entrusted upon me. It requires intellectual and literary equipments such as excessive reading and a facile pen which are quite lacking in me. Even then I have taken this responsibility with this objective that this job will be helpful in my spiritual evolution.

I thank the staff of the *Kalyana-Kalpataru* and Gita Press which has co-operated very much and endeavoured very hard to bring out this issue in time.

We could not pay more attention and provide space to the story side and mythological narrations. It was for two reasons— firstly we feel that Rāma is from amongst us—a human being

howsoever sublime yet full of human feelings. We sincerely feel that we can follow the path shown by Rāma. Secondly we feel that for our present and future generations there cannot be a better guide and inspirer to mould the life pattern of human beings universally. For these two reasons we exerted more to bring in the limelight the divinised humanity of Lord Rāma.

I would further solicit the good wishes of living saints—high souls who are always sympathetic and encourage us in our endeavour. In the end I pray to Lord Rāma to bless this humble enterprise and make this being a worthy instrument for carrying out His beneficent design and use him according to His will.

—*Keshoram Aggarwal*



सोचिअ बिप्र जो बेद बिहीना। तजि निज धरमु बिषय लयलीना॥
सोचिअ नृपति जो नीति न जाना। जेहि न प्रजा प्रिय प्रान समाना॥२॥
सोचिअ बयसु कृपन धनवानू। जो न अतिथि सिव भगति सुजानू॥
सोचिअ सूद्रु बिप्र अवमानी। मुखर मानप्रिय ग्यान गुमानी॥३॥
सोचिअ पुनि पति बंचक नारी। कुटिल कलहप्रिय इच्छाचारी॥
सोचिअ बटु निज ब्रतु परिहरई। जो नहिं गुर आयसु अनुसरई॥४॥

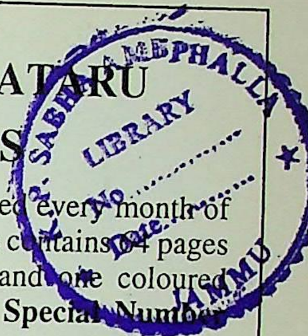
"Pitiable is the Brahman who is ignorant of the *Vedas*, and who has abandoned his own duty and is engrossed in the pleasures of sense; pitiable the king who has no knowledge of politics and who does not love his people as his own life: pitiable the *Vaiśya* (a member of the trading class) who is niggardly though rich, and who is not perfect in hospitality nor in devotion to Lord Śiva; pitiable the *Śūdra* (a member of the labour or artisan class) who is disrespectful towards the Brah loquacious and proud of his knowledge and loves to honoured. Pitiable, again, is the woman who deceives her own husband, is crooked and quarrelsome and follows her own will; pitiable the religious student who breaks his vow and obeys not the orders of his preceptor."

—*Mānasa*

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THE KALYANA-KALPATARU

BUSINESS RULES



(1) **The Kalyana-Kalpataru** is published every month of the Gregorian calender. Each ordinary issue contains 64 pages of printed matter besides the title sheets and one coloured illustration. Every **October Number** is a **Special Number** dealing with some particular theme.

(2) Commercial advertisements are not accepted for publication in the magazine.

(3) Change of address should be communicated before the 15th of the previous month. Subscribers are requested to mention their number and old address when sending intimation of a change of address. Temporary change of address should be arranged with the local post office.

(4) Remittances and correspondence relating to management, subscription etc., should be addressed to the Manager. Letters connected with the publication of articles are to be addressed to the editor.

(5) The annual subscription is payable strictly in advance. Subscribers are not enrolled for less than a year. The period of subscription is counted from **October** to **September**. Life members are not enrolled.

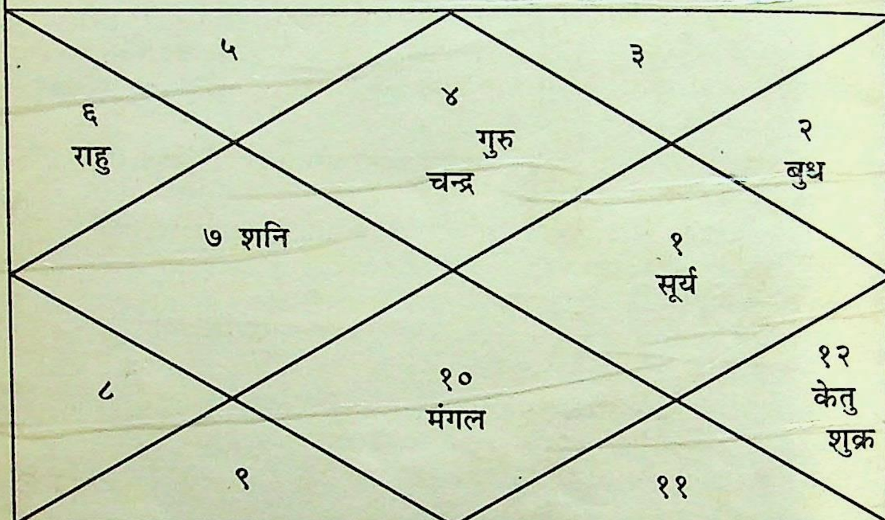
(6) The magazine publishes only articles that are helpful in promoting spiritual welfare. It welcomes contributions on subjects like *Bhakti*, *Jñāna* and *Vairāgya*, or biographies of saints who are no more on earth. Articles containing personal attacks or aspersion are not accepted. Only typed articles will be accepted for consideration. The editors reserve to themselves the right of ...rtailing or supplementing where necessary, or of publishing ...withholding publication of articles. Unpublished articles are ...ot returned unless asked for. The editors are not responsible for the statements or opinions of contributors.

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The Horoscopic chart of Lord Śrī Rāma



मधुमासे सिते पक्षे नवम्यां कर्कटे शुभे।
पुनर्वस्वृक्षसहिते उच्चस्थे ग्रहपञ्चके॥
मेषं पूषणि संप्राप्ते पुष्पवृष्टिसमाकुले।
आविरासीज्जगन्नाथः परमात्मा सनातनः॥

"On the bright ninth day of the month *Caitra*, in the constellation named *Punarvasu* while the ascendant was in the Cancer, the Sun in the Aries, Moon and Jupiter in the Cancer, Mars in the Capricornus, Mercury in the Taurus, Venus in the Pisces, Saturn in the Libra, Rāhu (The Dragon's head) in Virgo and Ketu (The Commet) in the Pisces; with a shower of flowers from the sky, the Lord of the cosmos, the Supreme Eternal Being manifested Himself."

(*Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* 1.3.14-15)